

A Preliminary Study of the History of Japanese Apologies for World War II

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Abstract

This paper reviews Yamazaki's (2006) rhetorical study of Japan's official apologies for its wrongdoings during World War II and for its colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula from the first apology to South Korea in 1965 to Maruyama's apology in 1995. This review reveals the evolution of Japan's apologies from the earliest apologies in the 60s and 70s, the comfort women apologies and the apologies and anti-apologies of the 90s. Comparisons to Germany's apologies for wartime wrongdoings reveal important similarities and differences that show the dangers of making simple comparisons. It is concluded that Japan's apologies to South Korea, China and the international community have failed for six basic reasons. It also concludes that Yamazaki's apology model is essential for the analysis of national apologies since it allows for the analysis of representation, sincerity and audience, three elements that are missing from either the four-part Lazare or the five-part linguistic models to which it is compared.

1. INTRODUCTION

It will soon be seventy-five years since the end of the Pacific War, yet there are many who feel that Japan, as a nation, has still failed to apologize or to apologize sufficiently, and that it has failed to show genuine repentance for its wars of aggression, atrocities and violations of basic human rights (Tolbert, 2017; Dahlstrom, 2015; & Dujarric, 2013). Moreover, there are wide perception gaps between countries. According to the Pew Research Center, 98% of South Koreans and 78% of Chinese believe that Japan has not sufficiently apologized, whereas only 28% of the Japanese agreed (Chun, 2015; Drake, 2013).

This paper is an attempt to better understand the reasons for this gap. The author reviews Jane Yamazaki's (2006) rhetorical study of Japan's apologies for historical wrongs during World War II and the colonial period to better grasp the history and issues concerning Japan's apologies and to examine Yamazaki's apology analysis framework for use in future research into Japan's wartime apologies. Of particular interest is how Yamazaki's framework compares to Lazare's (2004; Mosher, 2016 & 2017) four-part process for apologies, and with a widely accepted five-part linguistic model (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Shimizu, 2009; Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; University of Minnesota, 2015; Reviewed in Mosher, 2017).

Lazare (2004) states that at its most basic, an apology is a two-part encounter, in which the offender, takes responsibility for an offense, and expresses regret for his/her action to the aggrieved party. His four-part apology process is as follows: (1) acknowledgment of the offense; (2) communication of remorse and related attitudes; (3) explanations; and (4) reparations.

In the five-part linguistic model cited above, apologies can be made by using one or more of the

following routinized strategies: (1) an expression of apology; (2) an acknowledgement of responsibility; (3) an explanation or account; (4) an offer of repair; and, (5) a promise of nonrecurrence.

Yamazaki's (2006) book on Japanese wartime apologies begins with the earliest apology in June of 1965 to South Korea and continues up to Prime Minister Maruyama's seminal apology on August 15, 1995, the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. The apologies covered are mostly to South Korea and China, but are increasing given with an international audience in mind. This paper consists of the following sections: Yamazaki's apology model; main accusations against Japan; early apologies from 1965-1990; comfort women apologies; apologies and anti-apologies of the mid-1990s, a comparison with Germany's wartime apologies, and; conclusion.

2. YAMAZAKI' S APOLOGY MODEL

Yamazaki develops an analytical model for apologies based on concepts drawn from speech act and rhetorical theory and modified to accommodate nation-state apologies. First, following Tavuchis (1991), she states that an apology at minimum must contain an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the violated rule, an admission of wrong-doing and responsibility, as well as some expression of regret or remorse for the harm that has been done. Furthermore, she states national apologies like individual apologizes exist on a continuum from minimal to ideal, such as insincere, incomplete, partial and full. Yamazaki's five basic areas of apology analysis are: (1) naming the offense; (2) indicating regret; (3) representation; (4) sincerity; and (5) receptivity of the audience. The first two categories relate to the linguistic content of the apology. The third category has special significance for collective, nation-state apologies. Namely, who is qualified to speak for the nation? The final two categories are vital contextual components outside of the apology performance itself. For an apology to be taken as sincere, accompanying actions or statements of the government must not contradict the apology's content. The fifth category refers to the degree to which apology recipients accept an apology or not.

2.1 Naming the Offense

Naming the offense is the first requirement of an apology. In interpersonal apologies, this may be somewhat indirect since it can be assumed that all parties know what the wrong doing was. However, for nation-states, the naming provides an official record that may require greater clarity and specificity. The choice of words can also indicate the degree of seriousness of the offense, such as an error, the causing of pain or sorrow, or a crime. Finding the most satisfactory wording often requires negotiation and compromise.

2.2 Expression of Regret

Expressions of regret are not as simple as just saying "I'm sorry," or "I apologize," or their equivalents, since an apologizer may say they are sorry, but refuse to apologize because they have done nothing wrong. So, despite the use of the word sorry, this is merely a statement of regret and not an apology. The reverse is also possible. The accused may "apologize" and admit they are wrong, but insist they would do the same thing again because it was for a just cause, or because it was fun. True apologizes, then, must both take responsibility for the wrongdoing *and* express sincere regret.

In addition, for historical apologies, since the apologizer is most often not the wrongdoer, it is important the emotional and performative dimensions of the apology be convincing.¹ When German Chancellor Willy Brandt fell to his knees in Warsaw in December 1970 to apologize for Nazi war crimes, for example, it provided a potent and enduring image of heartfelt contrition.

2.3 Representation

For nation-state apologies the issue of representation is also of key importance. Who has the right to apologize for the nation? In the case of Japan, is it the Emperor, the Prime Minister or the Diet? Does the representative have the support of the people? How much consensus is necessary, and how should it be communicated? What is a suitable occasion or “stage” for the apology? Should it be public, formal, informal and so on.

2.4 Sincerity

For individuals, Yamazaki (2006) says, “sincerity can be defined as the congruency between ‘inward’ thoughts and outward expression (p. 20).” However, for nation-states, the definition is not as straight forward since the apologizer is apologizing for something others have done in the past, and determining sincerity requires the researcher to read minds or search for hidden motives.

Consequently, Yamazaki defines sincerity for national apologies as the consistency and consensus that is visible in public records. First, government officials must avoid any actions or statements that seem to contradict previous official apologies. Compensation that backs up the words of the apology may also be essential. Second, there must be “institutional consistency.” Examples of the later are consistency in government approved textbooks, the constitution, and citizenship rules.

2.5 Audience

Apologies are made to an offended other who must accept the apology, in order for it to be successful. In the case of national apologies, the audience is complex. In addition to the people directly offended, there are multiple publics, remote audiences, and national and international media which become involved in voicing acceptance or rejection of any given apology.

3. MAIN ACCUSATIONS

There are two levels of accusations against Japan: (1) specific wartime atrocities, and aggression, and (2) colonial rule in Asia. Unfortunately, the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal failed to address all aspects of the war. There was according to Yamazaki (2006), for example, “complete inattention to crimes/actions taken against Koreans who had been colonial subjects (p. 25).” One reason may be that four of the eleven allied countries that participated in the Tribunal (i.e., the UK, the United States, France and the Netherlands) were also colonial powers. Consequently, the Japanese public and government were left with many unresolved wartime issues.²

Moreover, new accusations have emerged over time and accusers have become more organized and international. In the 1990s, the issue of military comfort women became a major issue due to the revelation of official documents that proved there was official military involvement in the establishment and management of comfort stations, leading to the establishment of internationally

active special interest groups and legal suits against Japan. At the same time, PoW groups in Western countries and Chinese and American academic groups pressured Japan regarding the Nanking Massacre/Incident. In 1997, for example, the US House of Representatives officially demanded apologize and reparations for Nanking, the Bataan Death March, comfort women³ and PoWs.

Accusations have also been somewhat selective and overstated. For example, biological experimentations on prisoners and atrocities committed in the Rape of Manila have been largely overlooked. Information has sometimes been sketchy and the claims have been exaggerated, resulting in the polarization of accusers and accused. Moreover, for the two Koreas and China, Japan is the enemy whose defeat is closely linked to their national and political identities (c.f., Lee, 2019). However, not all Asian countries believe Japan should continue to apologize. Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Burma, Indonesia and Taiwan have all accepted Japan's apologies.

Unlike Germany, it has been much harder to identify who is guilty of wartime crimes. In Germany, it was the Nazi Party and Nazi officials, with whom there was a clear postwar break. In Japan, however, there was no clear break. Emperor Hirohito, who may seem to be the most likely person to blame, was removed from any responsibility by American authorities.

In 1996, the United Nations called for those who were involved in the sex slavery of comfort stations to be identified and punished. This is a new demand. But, Yamazaki (2006) asks, should old soldiers who visited comfort stations be charged when they thought that the women were prostitutes and that they were doing nothing illegal?

Finally, Yamazaki concludes that although the details and interpretations of facts may be contested, there is a consensus regarding the basic facts of the colonial and wartime accusations.

4. THE EARLY APOLOGIES: 1965 to 1990

The early Japanese apologies are relationship apologies, according to Yamazaki (2006), since their primary motivation was the restoration of relationships with neighboring countries. They express a degree of apology and regret short of a full, explicit apology. The first apology⁴ was given at the signing ceremony normalizing Japan and South Korean relations in 1965. In it, Japanese Foreign Minister Shiina expressed "true regret (*makoto ni ikan*)" and "deep remorse (*fukaku hansei*)" for an "unfortunate period in our countries'... history" (Yamazaki, p. 34). The words "remorse (*hansei*)," "regret (*ikan*)" and "unfortunate past" formed a basic vocabulary for the apologies to follow.

In 1972, there was a slightly more explicit apology to China in a joint written communique that established the basis for restoration of relations with Japan. Additionally, Emperor Hirohito made very brief statements to the Americans in 1975 and 1978 which expressed regret for an unfortunate past.

In the mid-1980s, as Cold War tensions began to ease, there was a growing realization, on all sides, of the importance of Asian relationships, and of the need for Japan to balance its over-dependence on the United States. A controversy over the wording of Japanese history textbooks that erupted in the summer of 1982 added a sense of urgency for the need to apologize. In short, according to Yamazaki, the controversy centered on incorrect media reports that the Japanese Ministry of Education had ordered the replacement of the word "invade (*shinryaku suru*)" with the less negative word "advance (*susumu*)." In fact, the government had only suggested the use of a milder tone. Still, the controversy revived a sense of distrust and suspicion of Japan's motives.

At the request of the South Korean government, Emperor Hirohito was the first to apologize on the occasion of the visit of President Chun Doo Hwan, on September 6, 1984, the first postwar visit of a Korean head of state. At the time, the Koreans thought the emperor was the best representative for the apology since the annexation and colonialization of the Korean peninsula had been carried out in his name. The Emperor's statement was given at an official dinner party at the Imperial Palace. It begins with an introduction highlighting the many centuries of cooperation and exchange between the Korean and Japanese peoples, and then states:

Notwithstanding that relationship, there was a brief period in this century an unfortunate past between our two countries. This is truly regrettable; and it will not be repeated again. (Yamazaki 2006, p. 36)

This statement names the offense and expresses regrets for past actions, and thus fulfills the minimal requirements for an apology. However, the naming of the offense is vague and nonspecific. It does not establish a clear record of the basic details of who, when, where and what actually occurred that was wrong: a serious problem for an official apology. The use of the passive masks who exactly regrets the past. However, the expression of forbearance ("will not be repeated again"), and even sometime in the last century represent an advance in clarity to the Emperor's statement to Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping in 1978 when he simply said, "At one time, there were unfortunate events (Ibid, p. 37)." To place things in context, it should be noted that ambiguity and lofty expressions are typical of imperial statements in general.

On May 24, 1990, Emperor Akihito apologized to South Korean President Roh Tae Woo at an official welcoming banquet similar to that of his father's. After stressing the close relations of the two countries over the centuries, he repeats his father's apology and adds words of his own.

... I am reminded of the words of the Showa emperor [Hirohito] that "There was a brief period in this century an unfortunate past between our two countries. This is truly regrettable and it will not happen again." When I think about the sufferings of the people in your country caused by our country in this unfortunate period, I cannot help but feel intense sorrow (*tsuuseki*). (Ibid, p. 39)

Like his father's apology six years earlier, Akihito does not explicitly name Japan's wrongdoing. He does more clearly state that the suffering was "caused by our country"; namely, Japan. By using the personal pronoun "I" (*watakushi*), he personalizes the expression of regret. The key apology word of intense sorrow (*tsuuseki*) is also much stronger than his father's words though some protested at the time that a true apology would have words such as *shazai*, *owabi* or *sumimasen*.

Prime Minister Kaifu also apologized to President Roh on May 24th and 25th of 1990.

During a period in the past, the people of the Korean peninsula experienced unbearable grief and suffering because of the actions of our country. (We) are humbly remorseful (*kenkyo ni hansei*) and wish to note our frank feelings of apology (*owabi*). (Ibid, p.42)

The biggest change is the use of a more explicit word of apology (*owabi*). In terms of the actions apologized for, Prime Minister Kaifu was only slightly more explicit than Emperor Akihito. He referred to actions (*kouji*) of Japan, but did not name them. Most notably, he even failed to refer to Japan's colonial rule of Korea, which he had promised to do.

Another thing that differentiates Kaifu's apology is that it is part of a dialog with Roh rather than a speech or press conference statement. Following his words of apology above, he says Japan and Korea need to cooperate with world organizations, but to build on their new relationship, they must first

seriously address the unfortunate past. The later was a clear reference to the need to establish a fund for Atomic bomb victims living in Korea, and to repatriate Koreans in Sakhalin to South Korea, actions that Japan did follow through on.

Although, improved relations were still a primary motivation for apologizing, the relationship was not seen as merely bilateral, but rather a multilateral relationship focused on rebuilding mutually beneficial economic relations in a new post-Cold War environment. The talks went so well that Yamazaki characterizes the two leaders as "singing a duet." At the final press conference, Roh and Kaifu declared that bilateral historical problems had been solved, and there was no further need for Japan to apologize.

However, the Korean public did not agree. According to the Korean press, there were two problems with Emperor Akihito and of Prime Minister Kaifu's apologies. First, the expressions of regret were too weak and should have included words, such as *shazai* (apology), or *sumimasen* (sorry) rather than the more ambiguous *tsuuseki* (deep regret). Second, there was insufficient specificity in the description of wrongdoing to convince the public that Japan (its government and people) were truly sorry, and what exactly they were sorry for.

Maintaining face for both parties proved too difficult. The Koreans needed to have their sufferings both in the war and as a colony validated and atoned for. But, the Japanese needed to be able to admit historical wrongdoings without recounting past atrocities and human rights violations in starkly explicit and humiliating detail. Thus, the Japanese desire to save face resulted in relatively weak apologies that provided insufficient evidence of contrition. Although Japan did take the concrete actions noted above to demonstrate sincerity, the appearance of a reluctance to apologize, and a lack of consensus among Japanese, left room for doubt at a time of rising nationalism in South Korea.

5. THE COMFORT WOMEN APOLOGIES

On December 6, 1991, thirty-five South Koreans, including former so-called comfort women, filed suit against the Japanese government demanding an apology. Although the Japanese government had up to this point denied any government or military involvement in what they said were privately operated brothels, just days later, according to Yamazaki (p. 58), Japanese researcher Yoshimi Yoshiaki uncovered Japanese Defense Agency records that proved the official nature of wartime prostitution.

This created a crisis situation for the Japanese government that required a fundamentally different type of apology in two ways. First, the government was no longer just apologizing for past wrongs. Now, they had to respond to a law suit and charges of a cover up in the present, requiring crisis apologies that addressed both past and present wrongs. Second, the comfort women apologies needed to address a new sense of morality. Although in the past, crimes against women were ignored as too embarrassing or even considered normal in times of war, public awareness and attitudes had changed. This required a transcendent apology that admitted to moral failings and allowed for the reestablishing of moral credibility.

Beginning in January of 1992, Japanese government officials including Prime Minister Miyazawa issued several apologies. On January 11, Cabinet Secretary Kato Koichi publicly acknowledged the Japanese military had been involved in the operation of comfort stations. On January 13, he released an

official cabinet memorandum. Typical of crisis apologies it began with expressions of sympathy for the victims and ended with a promise of an investigation. The memorandum includes the following apology:

When we consider the suffering experienced by the so-called comfort women of the Korean peninsula, it is heartbreaking (*mune ga tsumaru*).... The Japanese government has expressed deep regret and apologies before concerning past acts of Japan that have caused unbearable suffering for the people of the Korean peninsula, but in this case, we want to again express our sincere apology and regret to those who endured suffering beyond description (*hitsugetsu ni tsukahigatai*). The Japanese government is resolved that this should never happen again. (Yamazaki, 2006, p. 59)

Secretary Kato repeats many of Prime Minister Kaifu's words: "remorse," "apology" and "unbearable suffering." But, he also adds new more emotive language of "suffering beyond description" and "heartbreaking." The memorandum does not mention compensation, however, and Kato repeats the official position that this was settled by the 1965 normalization treaty with South Korea.

On January 17th, Prime Minister Miyazawa issued an apology as part of a major policy address to the South Korean legislature. In addition to repeating key words from Prime Minister Kaifu's apology (i.e., "unbearable suffering," "owabi" and "hansei"), he explicitly names Japan as the victimizer and Korea as the victim. This goes considerably beyond earlier references to the "unfortunate past." Another new element is his promise to educate the Japanese public regarding the "errors" of the past. Also, unique to this apology was that it was not the Korean government that was demanding an apology, but outraged citizens in Japan, South Korea and the international community. In fact, until this point, the Korean government had shown little interest in the issue (See also Lee, 2019).

However, Miyazawa's apology was rejected by the Korean Council, the main special interest group representing Korean comfort women. It was rejected as deceitful and insincere on two grounds. First, they said, sincere apologies must contain a full and detailed disclosure of the crimes and human rights violations committed. And second, there must be compensation for the victims.

In 1995, the Japanese government established the Asian Women's Fund to provide funds to former comfort women and appealed to the Japanese public for funds. It admitted wrongdoing and even acknowledged the recruitment of teenage girls and the limits of apologies alone to heal the emotional and physical wounds inflicted. By July 1996, the government promised to give any comfort woman, who could support her claim, ¥20 million and a letter of apology from Prime Minister Hashimoto. Although the fund itself was private, the government agreed to pay for medical expenses and other fund expenses.

The Korean Council, however, advised comfort women to refuse both the compensation and apology, insisting that payments come directly from the government as compensation for crimes against humanity.⁵ Specifically, they wanted the government to take responsibility for a criminal policy that included the abduction and rape of young girls. Yamazaki concludes that they wanted punishment and not reconciliation. A simply apology was not going to be sufficient.

The comfort women apologies are the strongest of Japan's apologies in terms of the explicit recognition of wrong doing. When faced with documentation, the government condemned the wrongdoing in unequivocal terms. However, perceptions of grudging admissions of wrongdoing and the failure of the government itself to compensate victims, have cast a lingering shadow over future apologies. Clearly, the goal posts had moved. The comfort women issue had become part of a bigger

international movement in the struggle against women's oppression.

6. APOLOGIES AND ANTI-APOLOGIES

6.1 The Hosokawa Apologies

In August of 1993, the political environment for apologies changed dramatically. The conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had lost its majority for the first time since 1955, and Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro formed the first non-LDP government in almost four decades. His coalition government consisted of eight minority parties and included members of the left-wing Socialist Party and other left of center parties. Apologies became more attractive for the new government which wished to distance itself from previous LDP governments.

Over the course of his brief nine-month tenure, Hosokawa made at least four apologies that more explicitly named Japan's offenses, expanded the audience for apologies and included leftist politicians for the first time. He moved the apology discourse along in several key ways. In his first press conference on August 10th he said, "My own personal understanding is that it was an aggressive war (*shinryaku sensou*) and a mistaken war (*machigatta sensou*) (Yamazaki, 2006, p. 148)." In a Diet speech, he bowed to conservative pressure by using the weaker expression of "acts of aggression," but he broke ground by apologizing for Japan's colonial rule, something that the United Kingdom, France, and the United States have resisted doing. In a visit to South Korea, he not only apologized for colonial rule, but made explicit reference to details of Japan's history of occupation. Also, in referring to the victims of war, he was the first to explicitly include non-Japanese.

Second, by including the Japan Socialist Party, he paved the way for the development of a more consensual view of the war which served to strengthen future official apologies as well. For the first time, the Socialists participated in the official end of war commemoration on August 15, a ceremony they had boycotted in protest of previous conservative governments' attitudes that admission that the war was unjust would deny the validity of those who sacrificed their lives for Japan. In 1993, when the Speaker of the House, Doi Takako, gave a speech at this ceremony, she was very explicit in describing the horrors of war, and in admitting to Japan's wrongdoings.

Third, the Hosokawa administration was a "new" government for which apologies were a convenient tool for showing a clear break from the policies of the "old" Japan; i.e., the LDP governments of the past 37 years. It was also a convenient way to help build a coalition with the Socialists. However, Hosokawa failed to maintain consensus with more conservative politicians, causing a backlash that brought his government to an early end.

6.2 Conservative Apologia

By 1994, according to Yamazaki (2006), it seemed Japan was on the way to making a full acknowledgement and settlement of outstanding wartime issues. However, three things prevented that. First, increasing international attention was given to the comfort women issue, resulting in more lawsuits and bad publicity. Second, there was a backlash to apologies among Japanese conservative groups and politicians that saw explicit recognition of Japan's wrongdoings as demeaning and derogatory. Third, high-level government officials made a series of statements that contradicted the basic premise of previous official apologies; namely, revisionist views of history that stressed positive

aspects of the war and avoided responsibility for wrongdoing.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Yamazaki documents “anti-apology” statements of several high-ranking conservative politicians that undermined the government’s official apologies. In rhetoric, these statements are clear examples of defensive *apologia* strategies that deny wrongdoing; minimize the offense; explain, excuse or rationalize; justify offenses as being for a greater purpose, and counter attack.

In July 1986, Education Minister Fujio Masayuki stated his interpretation of Japanese wartime history in an interview as follows:

War means killing people; world history is a history of aggression and war. The erroneous view that only Japan committed aggression must be corrected.... The verdict that [General] Tojo was a A-class war criminal was wrong. The assimilation of Korea in 1910 [into the Japanese Empire] had been by perfectly proper joint agreement between the representatives of the then states. (Yamazaki, 2006: 91)

Fujio’s statements make three defensive anti-apologetic assertions. First, he minimizes the wrongness of Japan’s actions by challenging the term aggression. He is saying this is not aggression, and every country does it; thereby, implying that the international criticism of Japan is unfair; i.e., he counterattacks the accuser. Second, he denies that General Tojo was an A-class war criminal by renaming the offense: he is a military leader, not a criminal. The implication is, of course, that the Tokyo war crime trial was biased and unfair. Thus, he minimizes the offense by questioning the terminology. Third, he uses a legalistic argument to defend Japan’s annexation and colonization of the Korean peninsula. He defends this action by a technicality while conveniently ignoring the fact the agreement was made under the coercive presence of Japan’s military forces.

In sum, Yamazaki concludes, Fujio’s brief statement uses four classic *apologia* strategies designed to defend against charges of wrongdoing: (1) minimization, (2) redefinition of terms, (3) differentiation from similar wrongdoing, and (4) questioning the motives of the accuser.

In 1987, Okuno Seisuke, the Minister of Lands, defended Japan’s aggressive military actions in Asia using the *apologia* strategy of claiming a higher purpose. His stated, “Japan is the only country with the resolve to resist the colonization of Asia by the white races, so should not be accused of aggressive intent (Yamazaki, 2006: 92).” In other words, he is saying we had good intentions, so any wrongdoing should be judged in that light. Since the war did result in the withdrawal of colonial powers from Asia, his argument carries weight among Japan’s conservatives.

Several other high-profile Japanese politicians followed with more anti-apology statements. In 1990, Ishihara Shintaro, a former LDP Diet member and mayor of Tokyo, claimed that the Nanking Massacre was a fabrication (*detchiage*). In May 1994, Justice Minister Nagano Shigeto said the term massacre was too strong. He argued it should be called a “war crime” or “atrocity” instead, and the war should not be termed an aggression since the intent was to liberate Asia. In August 1994, the Director-General of the Environmental Agency, echoed Nagano, saying the term aggression was wrong since there was no aggressive intent, and Asian countries gained their independence thanks to Japan.

Although Ishihara Shintaro retracted his statement, and all of the other conservative politicians were forced to resign, Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru himself used another *apologia* strategy. When asked at a press conference in 1989 if he agreed the Asia-Pacific War was a war of aggression, he said, “History’s judgment is a problem for future historians (Yamazaki 2006: 93).” This is a form of denial;

namely, “delay and avoidance.” When challenged, however, he admitted that the “aggressive nature of the war cannot be denied (p. 93).” Yamazaki says this type of confrontation avoidance strategy is particularly common among Japanese.

Despite the fact that many politicians took responsibility for their statements by resigning, the cumulative effect created the impression that Japan was reluctant to admit wrongdoing and give a true apology, and the Diet resolution of 1995 only served to strengthen that impression. Maruyama Tomiichi, the prime minister, made it a condition of his coalition government that the Diet pass a resolution apologizing for the war. Since he believed the resolution should be unanimous, much time and effort was given to consulting everyone on the wording. After considerable wrangling in public and private, the Diet passed a short three paragraph resolution on June 9, 1995. The second paragraph, quoted in full below, is the heart of the statement and comes closest to an apology.

Solemnly reflecting upon many instances of colonial rule and acts of aggression in the modern history of the world, and recognizing that Japan carried out those acts in the past, inflicting pain and suffering upon the peoples of other countries, especially in Asia, the Members of this House express a sense of deep remorse. (Yamazaki, 2006: 94)

The expression “a deep sense of remorse” is used, but the word apology (*owabi*) used by Prime Ministers Kaifu, Miyazawa and Hosokawa, or any close equivalent, is avoided. Colonial rule and acts of aggression are admitted, but in the context of modern history in which there have been many instances of colonialism and acts of aggression. And, Japan’s wrongdoing is minimized by placing it in the larger context of international wrongdoing.

The Diet resolution represented the culmination of the conservative backlash against the official government apologies, which had become increasingly explicit and unequivocal. The anti-apologizes created a counter-discourse that created the impression of an unrepentant Japan that has never (truly) apologized (c.f., Chun, 2015; Drake, 2013; Renee, 2011). It is commonsense that you cannot apologize and deny wrongdoing at the same time; yet, that is the effect of the clash between official apologies and the defensive *apologia*.

As President Roh stated in his reply to Emperor Akihito’s apology in 1990, “The past cannot be forgotten or erased, but [by means of] correct historical understanding/awareness” —that is by recalling the past as it was, and by “testifying” to and for the past—we can “wash away the past” (Yamazaki, 2006: 96). Roh is saying that apology has magical and paradoxical quality: you can best defend yourself by not defending yourself. To realize this magical potential to change “reality,” the apologizer must resist the temptation to explain, justify, deny or minimize the wrongdoing. Interestingly, this is something German politicians on both the right and left avoided doing.

Why do nations refuse to apologize then? Yamazaki (2006) says there are two types of objection: (1) rejection of the validity of the accusation; (2) opposition to apology even when the wrongdoing is accepted as true. For type one, people and countries may apologize even when unconvinced of the validity of the accusations to maintain harmonious relations. However, for nation-states, the recognition of wrongdoing becomes an official recognition of guilt which sets precedents and can damage reputations for years to come.

Yamazaki gives three reasons for the second type of resistance: (1) concern for political legitimacy; (2) respect for one’s predecessors; (3) fear of litigation and compensation. First, admitting to serious past wrongs can damage a country’s political legitimacy. There are servile implications of the accused

lowering themselves to their righteous victims. Second, Confucian ideas of respect for one's ancestors make it hard for a country like Japan to apologize. The Bereaved Families Association of Japan insisted throughout the apology debates that apologies dishonor the sacrifices and memory of soldiers who gave their lives for Japan. Such resistance is not peculiar to Japan, however. American veterans' groups, for instance, expressed similar sentiments when opposing the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum. Finally, apologies can be taken as evidence of legal guilt for groups seeking monetary compensation. Governments, she states, may be rightfully concerned about creating a non-ending demand for compensation.⁶ Japan, for its part, insists that all compensation issues were settled at the Tokyo War Crimes trial.

6.3 Maruyama Apology

Prime Minister Maruyama Tomiichi's apology on August 15, 1995 the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II was well received, and may be the most successful of all of Japan's postwar apologies according to Yamazaki. Indeed, even today it is considered to be the official Japanese apology. One thing that distinguished it from past apologies was that it was aimed at an international audience and received very significant international media coverage.

Just a few months before, on June 10th, Maruyama had failed to obtain a strong Diet resolution, and in July the Korean Council had condemned the Asian Women's Fund as inadequate. Consequently, he saw August 15th as a good chance to salvage the situation. Moreover, there had been no direct calls for an apology as in the past, so this was a chance to make an unsolicited apology.

He made the apology on the morning of August 15 at a press conference at his home before attending the official ceremony honoring Japan's war veterans. Here are excerpts of his ten-minute statement.

During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations. In the hope that no such mistake be made in the future, I regard, in a spirit of humility, these irrefutable facts of history, and express here once again my feelings of deep remorse (*tuusetsu na hansei*) and state my heartfelt apology (*kokoro kara no owabi*). (Yamazaki, 2006: 103)

This begins, Yamazaki explains, with the same vague and indirect language many have criticized before. "During a certain period in the not too distant past," a "mistaken national policy," "advance along the path to war," and "ensnare the Japanese people." These phrases do not make an unambiguous admission of wrong doing, nor is there any mention of the comfort women or PoWs. There is no detailed account of war atrocities or wrongdoing. But, then we do hear the words "colonial rule and aggression." Maruyama uses the stronger term of aggression and not the more ambiguous "acts of aggression." The phrase "irrefutable facts of history" signals a clear rejection of historical revisionism. And, for words of regret, he used *owabi* (apology) as well as the often used *hansei* (remorse).

In the next part of his statement, Maruyama directs his message to the domestic audience and asks the Japanese people to reflect on the lessons of the last fifty years.

We tend to overlook the priceless and blessings of peace.... [We must] convey to younger generations the horrors of war, so that we never repeat the errors of our history.... Now, upon

this historic occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war's end, we should bear in mind that we must look into the past to learn from the lessons of history, and ensure that we do not stray from the path to peace and prosperity of human society in the future.... Building from our deep remorse on this occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, Japan must eliminate self-righteous nationalism, promote international coordination as a responsible member of the international community and thereby, advance the principles of peace and democracy. (Yamazaki, 2006:105, 155-156)

Maruyama, Yamazaki says, justifies the need to apologize by focusing on internal issues of history, political identity and the future mission of the nation. In saying, we need to “ensure that we do not stray from the path of peace and prosperity of human society,” he is also promising his international audience to not engage in military adventurism or wars of aggression again. Further reassurance to the world is his assertion that Japan must eliminate “self-righteous nationalism” and work to achieve “peace and democracy.”

A particular strength of Maruyama's apology is the way he synthesizes the words and feelings of both sides of Japan's apology debate. First, he combines apology and self-criticism with praise for the Japanese people who rebuilt Japan as a peaceful and prosperous democratic nation. Second, he expresses his “feelings of profound mourning” for both victims “at home and abroad” before referencing the atomic bombings and vowing to work for disarmament and non-proliferation, and thus contribute to world peace.

The final sentence of his statement clarifies his appeals to multiple domestic and international audiences. He states, “It is my conviction that in this way alone can Japan atone/pay for (*tsugunai*) its past and lay to rest the spirits (*mitama*) of those who perished” (Yamazaki 2006: 107). The idea of atoning for the past appeals both to leftists in Japan and those in other countries who were the victims of Japan's aggression. The reference to laying to rest the spirits of those who perished refers to both Japanese war veterans on the right, who are honored at this ceremony, and to victims of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (a nod to pacifist and popular sentiment).

In addition, although the words he uses do not differ so much from the words used by Prime Minister Hosokawa, his style, emotional tone and ethos differ. In the opening, he states, “Now, when I remember the many people at home and abroad who fell victim to the war, my heart is overwhelmed by a flood of emotions (Yamazaki, 206: 107).” This combined with “heartfelt apology” resulted in the repetition of “Heartfelt Apology” in global headlines. Also, his years of work as a socialist politician and social justice activist gave him more credibility than previous prime ministers.

In general, Maruyama's apology was well received around the world. One major news outlet said, “finally an apology”. Another stated, Maruyama ends five decades of collective amnesia. Although these responses show unawareness or non-acceptance of past apologies, they also demonstrate the effectiveness of his apology. Some, however, felt that his speech was more of a private gesture than an official apology since he gave it at his home and not at the official ceremony. Moreover, in the afternoon of the very same day, more than half of Maruyama's cabinet visited Yasukuni Shrine to pray for the spirits of fallen soldiers (c.f, Koga, 2015).

7. INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

National apologies which were relatively rare before World War II, increased dramatically in the

postwar period and especially in the 1990s after the end of the Cold War. Yamazaki (2006) notes apologies by Sweden, the Vatican, the Soviet Union, the United States, and West and East Germany. These apologies have affected Japanese apologies both by providing models to emulate and against which to be judged. Yamazaki says the US apology to Japanese Americans in 1988 for their World War II interment, and the West German apologies have been the most influential. Here, the focus will be on the West German apologies.

German national apologies are often compared to Japanese apologies, and Japan usually comes out unfavorably. Some say Japan completely denies responsibility (Barkan, 2000 cited in Yamazaki, p. 115). Chang (cited in Yamazaki, p. 115) states that although Germany has paid war reparations, apologized to its victims, and even sent leaders to the Warsaw Ghetto to apologize, we have seen no comparable actions from the Japanese government.

Yamazaki (2006) argues, however, that comparisons with Germany often fail to accurately grasp the similarities and differences between the two countries. Specifically, there are three problematic assumptions: (1) Germany has adequately apologized; (2) the apology situations are sufficiently similar to make direct comparisons; (3) audience evaluation and receptivity have been similar.

First, Germany's record of apology has been criticized as well. Germans' have at times focused mainly on themselves as the victims. They have debated competing views of the past and engaged in revisionism. Both countries have privileged their war veterans and families over foreign victims. Both have resisted a wholesale purge of wartime elites, and there are periodic controversies over "public memories" of the war.

Second, on the surface, the similarities seem sufficient for easy comparison. Both countries were defeated in World War II. Both faced similar economic, moral and political recovery challenges. Both had significant wartime actions to apologize and atone for. Both had promoted militarism and racial superiority, and their neighbors and the international community expected penance.

However, there are many significant differences that make simple comparisons problematic. In the early postwar years, Japan was totally dependent on the United States politically and economically and had to delay coming to terms with its neighbors, and due to the Cold War, Japan had no diplomatic relations with China or North Korea. Germany, on the other hand, had to rebuild relations with its European neighbors immediately in order to recover. Jewish victims had powerful advocates that Japan's victims lacked. The nature of the allegations were also different. Germany was charged with genocide as well as aggression. In Germany, there was a complete and total change in governments and political parties, so governments were free to blame Hitler and the Nazi Party as the guilty parties. Whereas, in Japan, the ruling conservative party, the imperial system and the bureaucracy were largely a continuation of the prewar government. Thus, there was no clear, easy other to blame. One consequence, is that unlike Germany, the Japanese government is seen as responsible and deserving of blame by victims and their advocates.⁷

Thirdly, according to Yamazaki, the responsiveness to German and Japanese apologies has differed dramatically. In general, the state of Israel, the Jewish community and Germany's European neighbors have willingly accepted German apologies and compensation. Whereas, the two Koreas and China have been much less receptive despite numerous official apologies and compensation efforts. A difference only partly explainable by Japan's delayed apologies and differences in compensation payments.

Here, is a brief look at four of the German apologies examined in Yamazaki (2006). The first three

are made by West German chancellors in 1951, 1970 and 1985. The fourth is an official statement of remorse by the East German Parliament made in 1990. The first apology is given by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in September of 1951. Contrary to what might be expected, it includes no explicit apology statement, and it focuses on the suffering of the victims as opposed to German guilt. Moreover, it presents German reparations as an act of goodwill rather than an admission of guilt. It does, however, come fourteen years before the first Japanese apology.

The second apology was made by Chancellor Willy Brandt in December of 1970 when he visited the Warsaw Ghetto and fell to his knees. It is actually a very strange apology, according to Yamazaki, since it lacks any words of apology, there was no prior official decision to offer an apology, and there was no clear recipient. Still the emotional impact of this gesture was very powerful and has been widely accepted as an indication of the true feelings of the German government and its people. The fact that Brandt spent his war years as a member of the anti-Nazi resistance in Norway also lent authenticity to his gesture. Interestingly, although Prime Ministers Kaifu, Maruyama and Hashimoto have attempted similar “gestures,” they have received little media attention.

The third apology was made by President Richard von Weizsacker in a speech to the German Bundestag on May 8, 1985, and like Prime Minister Maruyama’s apology is often referred to as the German apology. In contrast to Maruyama’s ten-minute press conference, Weizsacker’s speech was one hour in length. It lacks apology words such as “I/We apologize” nor explicit words of regret. Instead, he gives a detailed list of the victims: Jewish men, women and children; gypsies; political prisoners; mentally retarded; and even the women of the world, then explicitly refers to every conceivable wartime wrongdoing: rape and pillage, forced labor, forced sterilization and so on. His speech is a kind of elegy with the focus on remembering rather than on guilt. Although he addresses guilt, he rejects the collective guilt of the entire nation, but stresses that Germans’ are responsible. He seems to say that even though we ourselves did not commit the crimes, we take responsibility and accept the consequences.

Weizsacker’s apology presents an interesting shift in apologetic discourse, according to Yamazaki (2006). The focus is on the memory and commemoration of the victims. It is more about remembering the injustice and mistreatment of victims than promises of forbearance, and it emphasizes the healing and restoration of the victims over that of the perpetrator’s guilt. Renee (2011) and Rienzi (2015) also highlight this feature of German apologies.⁸

In 1990, on the occasion of German unification, the East German Parliament issued a formal apology for the “immeasurable suffering” caused by the Nazis during World War II including the “genocide” of Jews living Europe and the people of the Soviet Union, Poland, and the Gypsy people. The statement acknowledged the “persecution” and “degradation” of Jews by communist East Germany after 1945, and finished with a declaration of willingness to “contribute” to the “healing of mental and physical sufferings” and pay “just compensation for material losses.” Again, the statement does not include words of apology, but it clearly implies a sense of apology by asking for forgiveness. Also, although this indirect apology was offered much later than Japanese apologies, it was a strong, official apology made by the post-communist parliament, and was well received.

Yamazaki (2006) concludes that German apologies indicate a clear acceptance of responsibility to make restitution for war crimes, and like Japanese apologies the expression of remorse and responsibility becomes more explicit over time. In contrast to Japanese apologies, however, there is

little emphasis on the aggression of war itself. But, both countries have been apologizing for different things. German apologies focused on crimes against the Jews and other peoples; whereas, Japan's focused more generally on a war of aggression and eventually on colonization. Germany decided to apologize and make reparations much earlier and of their own volition; whereas, most Japanese apologies came at the request of the accusers. Many comparisons exaggerate the differences in the degree of contrition displayed, and fail to appreciate the differences in *apologia* situations and the focus of the apologies.

8. CONCLUSIONS

When national apologies work, Yamazaki (2006) argues, they function to (1) repair relations with other countries, (2) facilitate the learning of history and the affirmation of basic moral principles, (3) provide historical records, and (4) heal victims' trauma and grievances, and validate their identities. Sadly, she concludes that despite Japan's many official apologies, there is a widespread view that Japan has not apologized for its wartime record, and thus has failed to some degree in each of the above apology functions.

Yamazaki's examination of Japan's apologies reveals several key reasons for this failure.⁹ First, Japan's official apologies tend to name the offenses at a high level of generality. The two imperial apologies, for example, were notable for their use of genteel euphemisms, ambiguity and lofty expressions. This lack of detail and abstraction lessen the emotional appeal of the apologies.

Second, in the showing of regret, early Japanese apologies used the word *hansei*, translated as remorse or reflection. While this is central to Japanese notions of apology, it is a vague term that has gotten little respect in the international press (e.g., Kristof, 1998 cited in Yamazaki, 2006). It was not until the 1990s that the less ambiguous terms of *owabi* and *shazai* (apology) were used.

Third, is the problem of representation. In Japan, apologies have been made by emperors, prime ministers, foreign ministers, cabinet secretaries and official investigation representatives. But, there have been questions about the representativeness of these apologies as was noted even with the Maruyama apology. Most serious, though, is the lack of a strong official statement of apology from the Diet. This has particularly caused dissatisfaction with the comfort women apologies as Hicks summaries:

To this day the Diet has not issued an official apology to the former comfort women. The latter do not consider Emperor Akihito's or Prime Minister Miyazawa's apologies, issued in 1990 [sic], official government apologies—statements that speak for the people of Japan. Rather, they are viewed as personal expressions of remorse, however deeply felt.... The governments of South Korea and North Korea do not see Japan as having issued an official apology to the former comfort women. (Hicks 1999, cited in Yamazaki 2006:131-132)

Fourth, is the question of sincerity. As Yamazaki states (2006, p. 132), "Sincerity requires the appearance of consistency and consensus in government statements, actions and institutions." Japan's dueling apology and anti-apology discourses have severely damaged the projection of sincerity.¹⁰ Attempts at historical revisionism, such as secondary school history textbooks, repeated Yasukuni Shrine visits by prime ministers and cabinet members, and the insistence of the Japanese government of the finality of the reparations made at the time of the postwar treaty settlements have sent messages to the international community that undermine the message of official apologies.

Fifth, the timing and pace of Japan's apologies have been slow. The first Japanese apology was not until 1965, fourteen years after the first German apology. Regardless of the reasons for this delay, it feeds the narrative that Japan has been reluctant to apologize in sharp contrast with Germany. By the time Japan issued a series of stronger apologies in the 1990s, the expectations of the international community had risen (c.f., the comfort women apologies).

Sixth, for an apology to be successful the audience must accept it. The fact that Japan has been forced to offer repeated apologies for the same offenses shows a lack of acceptance and forgiveness. Repeated demands for apologies have caused apology fatigue (Chun, 2105) and backlash among Japanese conservatives.¹¹ Moreover, the two Koreas and China have national identities rooted in liberation from the tyranny of Japan. For political reasons, it is convenient to treat Japan as the "bad guy."¹²

This study reveals interesting differences between Yamazaki's model for national apologies and the four-part process of Lazare (2004) and the five-part linguistic model. Lazare's model includes "explanations" as the third part of his four-part model. Similarly, "an explanation or account" is the third strategy in the linguistic model (University of Minnesota, 2015). Yamazaki says repeatedly, however, that successful national apologies do not include explanations or justifications. Rather, she says, these strategies are features of anti-apologies. This researcher thinks, however, that closer analysis may reveal similarities between detailed accounting/naming of wrongdoings and sincere explanations that take responsibility rather than justify wrongdoing. Also, the linguistic model contains a promise of forbearance which is not in the Yamazaki model although it is in some of the national apologies reviewed here. Yamazaki's model, which is based on both speech act and rhetorical theory, on the other hand, contains three parts not in either Lazare or the linguistic model which seem essential for the analysis of national apologies; namely, representation, sincerity and audience. As we have seen problems in any one of these three areas can determine the success or failure of national apologies.

This paper finishes with a few questions for future research. Why have some countries forgiven Japan whereas others' have not? Is it due to differences in Japan's apologies, or differences in the audience? Are audience differences related to differing views of history?¹³ Does the use of the word *hansei* (and accompanying non-verbal expresses of reflection/remorse) indicate differences in apology cultures? Can the failure of earlier Japanese apologies be seen as intercultural miscommunication? Has Japan's apology culture changed? Can Saito's (2015) cultural pragmatics framework facilitate understanding of Japan's wartime apology failures? Are monetary reparations the only effective expression of sincerity? Can Japan's overseas economic development projects also express sincerity?

Notes

- 1 See also Sato's (2015) *mise-en-scene* (staging) element of political apologies.
- 2 For useful information regarding the settlement of wartime issues, treaties and reparations see History Issues Q&A (2019). Dahlstrom (2015) also has useful links to the "Tokyo Trials."
- 3 The US House of Representatives passed a resolution in 2014 introduced by California Representative Mike Honda calling for Japan to apologize unequivocally for the wartime occupation and enslavement of women (Akaha, 2014).
- 4 Note: Japan apologized to Burma/Myanmar and to Australia in 1957 (List of Apology Statements,

- 2019).
- 5 According to Akaha (2014) the fund dispersed payments to 285 former comfort women in South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines as of 2005.
 - 6 Case in point, in August 2019 on the 80th anniversary of the start of WWII, Poland insisted that Germany still owes them compensation arguing that while the Jewish people have received compensation many Poles have received nothing (Easton, 2019).
 - 7 The unofficial international tribunal for comfort women crimes held in Tokyo in 2000, for example, concluded that both the wartime and current Japanese governments were guilty (Yamazaki, 2006).
 - 8 Renee (2011) argues apologies may be more detrimental than helpful for Japan and that it may be more productive to imitate Germany and stress the “practices of remembrance that do not fuel denial and glorification but that promote justice.”
 - 9 Despite this, according to a Pew survey in 2015, Japan is viewed the most favorably of all nations in the Asia-Pacific region with a median 71% approval rate. In Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Australia more than 80% approve of Japan; whereas, the rate is only 25% in Korea and 12% in China.
 - 10 Rienzi (2015) describes Japan’s apologies as akin to “islands in a sea of denial.” He also notes that Germany as of 2015 was still paying reparations to Israel. Japan, on the other hand, disbanded the Asian Women’s Fund in 2007 (History Issues, Q&A, 2018).
 - 11 Also, see Renee (2011) regarding the contrition to backlash cycle of Japan’s apologies.
 - 12 Lee (2019) provides an in-depth explanation of South Korea’s tribal mentality and political use of apologies as well as its own historical revisionism.
 - 13 See Chun & Cho (2016) and Saito (2017).

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