

**AICGS Conference in Berlin 2013**

**Political Leaders and Reconciliation:  
With or Without Morality?**

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“European Peace sets an example for Northeast Asia. Despite the historical and cultural difference, I do not believe that universal ethics for peace is different. In Northeast Asia, we desperately need it as well.”

*Korean Route and its New Horizon, Lee Myung-bak*

“Postwar Europe's journey toward integration was possible due to a new window of cooperation based on a 'grand reconciliation' among Germany, France and the U.K. We also remember West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's landmark 1970 visit to the monument commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943. That was when Europe's journey toward reconciliation really began.”

*A Plan for Peace in North Asia, Park Geun-hye*



Historic Merkel Visit to Nazi Concentration Camp where 200,000 people were imprisoned and more than 41,000 persons were killed, starved or died of disease during the Nazis' reign.

Dachau, 20 August, 2013



Park paid a visit to the mausoleum of late Vietnamese revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh and presented a wreath, a symbolic gesture of reconciliation.

*Yonhap News, 9 September, 2013*

# MAKING PEACE WITH HISTORY



During a visit to Poland in 1970, German Chancellor Willy Brandt knelt before a monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It was a silent act that lasted only a brief moment. But the image became a symbol of Germany's remorse and gave people around the world hope that peace and reconciliation were possible. German leaders since Brandt, including Angela Merkel, have continued to apologize on behalf of their country. Germany has also made reparations to the victims of the Holocaust.

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Japan however, has taken a different approach. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has declined to atone for, or even fully recognize, Japan's past acts of aggression. Mayor Toru Hashimoto of Osaka has claimed that the women forced into sexual slavery for Japanese troops during WWII were 'a military necessity.' Though his statement was roundly criticized, it was indicative of a general refusal by Japan's leadership to confront its history. Japan needs to issue an apology and provide compensation for the victims euphemistically called 'comfort women.' Only then can Japan be regarded as a true member of the international community and contribute to world peace.

*Wall Street Journal*, August 12, 2013



“For soldiers who risked their lives in circumstances where bullets are flying around like rain and wind, if you want them to get some rest, a comfort women system was necessary.”

Toru Hashimoto, 13 May, 2013



“The definition of aggression has yet to be established in academia or in the international community.”

Abe Shinzo, 23 April, 2013



# What Lessons from European Political Leaders?

## □ Franco-German Reconciliation

- Interpersonal Relations
- Regional Peace as National Interest

## □ Polish-German Reconciliation

- Apology Politics

# What Future for Korean-Japanese Reconciliation?

- Non-reconciliatory politics
- Moral leadership?
- Balancing national interest and morality

Reconciliation in politics  
is at the crossroad of  
*realpolitik* and ethics.

