

While I agree with much of professor Kelly writes, I also agree with his critics charge that he adopts a thoroughly modern Western liberal perspective. The problem with doing that in non-Western contexts is that it often leads to conclusions that are unrealistic and therefore impractical and unhelpful.

It seems clear that professor Kelly believes that Prime Minister Abe should have adopted a still more apologetic tone, although he surely realizes as well as Michael Auslin (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304418404579464961123578976>) that adding new apologies to the 18 or so that Japan has issued already, would make no difference at all.

Some people in the West believe that a gesture similar to that of the German socialist chancellor Willy Brandt in 1970, when he melted down at the monument to the victims of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising during a visit to the then communist Poland. But any such gesture would be totally inappropriate. Any comparison between Japanese actions and the Holocaust would be obscene (which does not stop Chinese and Korean nationalists making such comparisons at every opportunity) and while Germany has indeed done as much as possible to atone the inexpressible crimes against the Jews it has done much less than Japan in making up for the mass destruction inflicted on the its other victims. In particular, under the 1965 treaty signed normalizing relations between Japan and Korea, South Korea received very large amounts of economic aid, grants, loans and, significantly, compensation for victims of Japanese rule which laid the foundation for South Korea's rapid economic development. Poland whose World War II losses, which included nearly a fifth of its population and total devastation of its economy, having been abandoned by its Western allies, received very little. Its communist government was pressured by its Soviet masters to accept a derisory compensation from East Germany and renounce any further claims, which "renunciation" was then happily "inherited" by United Germany.

There can be, of course, no comparison, between the massive destruction inflicted by Germany on Poland during WWII and the experience of Korea under Japanese colonial rule (I will discuss a more appropriate comparison below). But it is truly astonishing how Korean nationalist backed by the Chinese propaganda machine, have succeeded to achieve world wide publicity for and even create the impression of a "scholarly consent" on the subject of "comfort women" while the world has totally ignored the existence of a similar system run by the German Wehrmacht, using women from occupied countries. Not only has Germany never offered an apology (not to mention a compensation) but one has never even been demanded. (For further details see my article on the "comfort women" issue: <http://www.mimuw.edu.pl/~akoz/History/SettledHistory.pdf>)

In any case, there is very little concern here in Poland about obtaining any further German apologies or compensation. The great majority of Poles recognize that today's greatest danger to Poland derives not from Germany's failure to atone for past or even less from any desires to repeat it (which is the most grotesque of the claims one hears from Korean nationalists about Japan) but from something completely different, indeed in some sense the opposite. In view of the situation in Ukraine and the increasingly open Russian threats of aggression

against the Baltic states (and not just threats: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/estonian-kidnap-is-russia-s-latest-provocation/506874.html>) it is certainly highly worrying that polls in Germany show the majority of German public opinion opposed to helping to defend Germany's Nato allies. Saying that "Putin is a thug" is hardly helpful, if you do not propose to do anything to stop the thuggery.

Let me return again to the question of apologies and why in particular Korean demands (as well as Western support for them) appear so absurd from here.

As everybody knows, in the 20th century Korea was never subjected to an invasion or a war. After the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5, Japan first turned Korea into a protectorate and then, after the assassination of Ito Hirobumi in 1910, annexed it. It was done in collaboration with its ally Great Britain, and closely followed the British behaviour in its own colonial empire, particularly in India. As was usually the case in such situations, there were various motives involved, but arguably the primary was a defensive one: to prevent Korea falling into the hands of Russia (the most likely possibility) or China.

Between 1910 and 1945 the Japanese policies in Korea varied, sometimes tending towards cultural autonomy, sometimes towards complete assimilation. I will not even attempt to describe this (but <http://www.amazon.com/Japanese-Colonial-Legacy-Korea-1910-1945/dp/1937385701> is my preferred source), but I would like to point out that these policies and their aim were much closer to those practiced by Russia in the part of Poland that found itself under Russian rule after the partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century and by newly independent Poland in Eastern Galicia during 1920-1945 (and by many other states in other places, of course), than to those of Western powers in their colonies (where in most cases no attempts were made at assimilation of the native population). The biggest difference was that Japanese policies were in almost every respect and most of the time considerably milder.

After the failure of the Polish January Uprising of 1863, the Kingdom of Poland (established by the treaty of Vienna in 1815) was deprived of its autonomy. Tens of thousands of Poles were exiled to remote regions of Russia, vast numbers of estates were confiscated. All Polish civil servants were deprived of their positions and replaced by Russians, Russian became the official language of the country, and with the exception of religious instruction, all education was to be conducted in Russian. Poles who wanted to get a university education or pursue a public career, had not only to use the Russian language but change their religion to Orthodoxy. This continued for over 40 years, until the revolution of 1905, caused by Russia's defeat by Japan (Polish revolutionaries received Japanese help in the form of money and weapons), after which some of the Russification policies in education were partially reversed. However, only when the German Army occupied Warsaw in 1915 was the University of Warsaw reopened as a Polish university.

Needless to say, Russia has never apologized for any of this nor is there any one so naïve to expect such an apology. But the rest of the story I would like to tell is even more instructive.

The defeat of the central powers in the First World War and the Russian Revolution led to the creation of independent Poland, which, after the war with Bolsheviks in 1920, found

itself in possession of Eastern Galicia and Volhynia, once part of the medieval Polish state and later under Austrian rule. The population of Eastern Galicia was mixed, Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish, with the Ukrainians being a large majority in the countryside, while Poles and Jews in the cities. In 1919 the Poles defeated the Ukrainians in a struggle for control. In 1920 the two of them temporarily allied themselves against the Bolsheviks but the final armistice left the Ukrainians empty handed. In the subsequent years Poland started to apply in West Ukraine under its control policies exactly analogous to the ones that Russia applied in Poland during its rule there. Ukrainian language and education were suppressed, orthodox churches were closed and replaced by catholic ones, etc. Ukrainian nationalists replied with a campaign of terror, which was crushed by the Polish authorities and principal nationalist leaders such as Stepan Bandera jailed. The Polish state collapsed again in 1939 under the blows delivered jointly by Nazi Germany and Soviet Union. After the Germans turned against their erstwhile allies, the Ukrainian nationalists saw their chance to solve the Polish problem permanently, by completely eliminating the Polish minority. I won't try to describe what exactly happened (particularly that it is an object of a dispute at least as unyielding as that about the comfort women) but a fair and comprehensive account is on Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massacres_of_Poles_in_Volhynia_and_Eastern_Galicia

My point is this: not only nobody has apologized for these events but even Polish and Ukrainian historians cannot agree, in spite of many attempts, on a mutually agreed version of what actually happened. No such agreement is in sight in the foreseeable future. Yet, now, the Ukraine is involved in a struggle for its existence, Poland its strongest and most committed supporter in Europe. Among other things, Polish volunteers are bringing aid to Ukrainian volunteers fighting Russians and their proxies in East Ukraine, even though many of these volunteers are admirers of exactly the same nationalist leaders whom many Poles blame for the genocide of their compatriots. And clearly this is the only rational approach, based on the fundamental realization that even when people are mistaken about history (for example because of their need for heroes) it does not mean that they wish to repeat it.

This Polish-Ukrainian example is far from unique, of course, in fact one can find it almost everywhere where competing nationalisms clash. And not just nationalisms. The Japanese "internationalist" Left, for example, which likes to call its nationalist opponents "deniers" and "revisionists" (the last term being particularly absurd since it is a truism that all history is "revisionist") has itself an unmatched record of denial: Stalin's show trials, the Gulag, the communist mass murders in China, Cambodia Vietnam, and North Korea, all of these have been denied at one time or another by most of the Japanese left wingers fighting the "denials of the Right". Would it then be fair to assume that when they denied these events they were actually thinking of repeating them?

Finally I would like to return to Japanese history, because I find the subject of Russo-Japanese war difficult to resist. Last May, on the anniversary of the battle of Tsushima, the celebrated Russian historian Andrey Zubov, compared Putin's Crimean adventure to the Russia's war with Japan (because of the extreme stupidity and damage caused to Russia by

both). Zubov began with Russia (backed by Germany and France) forcing Japan to withdraw from the Liaodong Peninsula (which the Japanese occupied after the Japan-China war) and return it to China. Following this, Russia promptly seized the peninsula for itself and built the Port Arthur fortress. Simultaneously Russia started its advance towards Korea. Japan then made a proposal to Russia which essentially amounted to giving to Russia full control of Manchuria in return for a free hand in Korea. Russia rejected all Japanese proposals, because, as is clear from Russian documents, it intended to annex both Manchuria and Korea (with Nicholas's II famously calling the Japanese "macaques").

Now, as everybody known Japan, began the war with a sudden attack on the Russian navy in Port Arthur, without a declaration of war. The Russians protested but the London Times wrote:

"The Japanese Navy has opened the war by an act of daring which is destined to take a place of honour in naval annals."

The reaction in the United States was similar. Not surprisingly, whether a military action will "live in infamy" or "take place of honour in naval annals" turns out to depend not on the action itself but on the point from which it is being viewed. Historians should never forget about this.

Professor Kelly writes: "For example, colonized people everywhere were apparently thrilled that Japan defeated Russia in 1905. That is pretty self-serving, not to mention inaccurate."

I am sure there is plenty of evidence that Japan's victory did contribute to the decline of the prestige of European powers in among the colonized people's of Asia and the rise of nationalism there (from my point of view, a mixed blessing) though not as much as subsequent humiliation the colonial powers suffered at the hands of the Japanese in the beginning of the Pacific War. But the Japanese victory was celebrated not just in Asia. It had a powerful impact throughout the Russian empire and particularly in Poland. So Prime Minister Able was probably more correct than even he realized.

There is one point, however, on which I completely agree with professor Kelly. Today's Japanese Right is often schizophrenic. It has basically adopted the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist view of the Left except when it concerns Japan. But anti-colonialism certainly not the view of the great statesmen of Meiji Japan such as Ito Hirobumi, or the liberal politicians of the "Taisho democracy" period, such as Hara Kei. For these politicians, for whom I quite frankly admit to having a great admiration, close collaboration with Britain and the United States was the "bone marrow" of Japan's foreign policy. The Japanese anti-colonial ideology is the creation of a different period and of very different kind of politics and of people who saw these pro-Western politicians as traitors (ironically, both Ito and Hara were assassinated, the former by a Korean and the latter by a Japanese nationalist). There is nothing surprising in this Japanese movement from colonialism to anti-colonialism, for this involved different people in different ages as it did in other countries, including the United States. Political leaders and their ideologies genuinely change and hypocrisy (although obviously always well represented in politics) does not explain it.

As for myself, I see no reason at all for Britain to apologize for her empire and equally no reason for Japan to apologize for her much smaller one. These were based on ideas of their time and these ideas were not inherently evil and even, arguably, on balance beneficial. None of that implies any desire to restore these empires which now firmly belong to history. This is exactly what distinguishes Japanese revisionism from Putin's or Chinese one and this is by far the most important thing.