



POST-CONFERENCE
REPORT

THE POLISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**POLISH EXPERIENCE IN RECONCILIATION:
A MODEL FOR RAPPROCHEMENT
IN EAST ASIA?**

WARSAW
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Editors: Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar, Piotr Mejsner

Warsaw, May 2014

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On 13 March 2014 in Warsaw, the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM) in cooperation with the Korea Foundation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Northeast Asian History Foundation and Korean Embassy in Warsaw organised the international seminar “Polish Experience in Reconciliation: A Model for Rapprochement in East Asia?” The meeting aimed at fostering discussion among Korean, Polish and German experts about the applicability of the Polish and European experiences and mechanisms in reconciliation in East Asia. Special attention was paid to Korean–Japanese relations. About 60 government officials, experts, and scholars attended the seminar.

Executive Summary

- East Asia is a region where historical disputes and misunderstandings have not been successfully dispelled yet. One of the serious problems is a general lack of trust between Japan and Korea on the governmental and people-to-people levels stemming from the difficult history of bilateral relations and past events, mainly the Japan’s occupation of Korea in 1910–1945, and also the Japanese aggression against China in 1937.
- Among the most acute problems are territorial spats between China and Japan involving the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in the East China Sea and between Japan and Korea involving the Takeshima/Dokdo islands in the Sea of Japan. Regional cooperation is also hampered by the collective memory in Korea and China of Japan’s wartime atrocities, differences in historical interpretation, and the issue of a Japanese Yasukuni shrine commemorating those who died for the emperor, including war criminals convicted in the Tokyo trials.
- There is a lack of political will for engagement and low political priority attached to reconciliation by the East Asian governments. History is often used for domestic purposes, which contributes to the rise of nationalism which, in turn, hampers reconciliation. What is more, full acceptance of guilt is still missing, with apologies given by perpetrators questioned internally or assessed as insincere by victims. Moreover, victim status is cultivated not only in China and Korea but also in Japan, narrowing room for real rapprochement.
- Europe is perceived as a continent with successful reconciliations. Nevertheless, there is not one universal European model. Each process requires different codes and different gestures, and involves different nations, historical experiences, memories and geopolitical environments. This phenomena is clearly noticeable when taking into account Poland–German and Poland–Russia reconciliation. The first has been, to some extent, completed successfully. The latter is still in progress.
- There are some features of European reconciliation (e.g., Poland–German and French–German) that might be perceived, to some extent, as a European rapprochement model. European reconciliation was based on political will and a depoliticised approach. It was a bilateral, not multilateral process. The process was initiated by the wartime generation—people who remembered the war and tried to protect the next generations from such tragedy.
- In the European case, prerequisites for reconciliation were the settlement of border issues, war reparations, perpetrators’ admittance of guilt and responsibility for wrongdoings during wartime, victims’ willingness to work again with their victimisers or even to initiate reconciliation. Important roles were played by charismatic leaders who had the courage to propose steps or make symbolic gestures that often went against public opinion but which later were transformed into symbols of reconciliation. Indispensable stakeholders included religion, specifically churches for which reconciliation is a religious concept linked with such notions as empathy, sin, guilt and forgiveness.

- Reconciliation is a process that has neither a definite end nor is achieved once and for all. To preserve the results of rapprochement, institutionalisation of this process is required. Poland and Germany have established various mechanisms at the state and extra-state levels. There are also mechanisms that support Poland–Russia reconciliation, which is still in progress.
- Bearing in mind European reconciliation experiences, the following steps and initiatives should be considered and undertaken by Korea and other regional states to launch a rapprochement process:
 - study European reconciliation experiences and mechanisms and, if possible, adjust them to Asian conditions;
 - cooperate with Japan through regular dialogue or the implementation of joint projects in order to at least assuage or mute territorial tensions;
 - initiate reconciliation with Japan through such symbolic steps as showing a generous willingness to forgive;
 - involve charismatic moral and religious leaders to take the initiative, make gestures and create symbols that can be easily memorised as “pictures” of reconciliation;
 - present a long-term proposal for Korea–Japan reconciliation, including joint initiatives, mechanisms and institutions, even if they seem controversial;
 - launch a mechanism of dialogue between wartime victims and the young generation from the perpetrator side;
 - resume the work of a joint textbook commission which should have as its main goal to prepare teaching tips and auxiliary materials highlighting differences in the perception of history to eliminate the deficit in historical knowledge, myths, half-truths and hostility;
 - establish an informal study group with Polish, German, Korean (and later, with Japanese) experts to prepare a report with a detailed plan of reconciliation.

Keynote Address by Professor Adam Daniel Rotfeld*

Poland–Germany–Russia: An Experience with the Reconciliation Process and Dialogue

Introductory Words

The reconciliation process and dialogue cannot be the subject of analysis and evaluation in the abstract—ignoring specific circumstances and the general political situation. We cannot ignore the present developments in and around Ukraine for a simple reason: all that is going on inside and outside of Ukraine and the violation of all the rules mutually accepted by the West and Russia is undermining the political and legal order established as the result of the end of the Cold War. We are confronted now with an urgent need to construct a new Code of Conduct in our relations with Russia. Having said that, I should switch to the subject of my presentation as the organisers requested and defined it.

Findings

The experience of the Polish–Russian dialogue within the Group on Difficult Matters brought me to the conclusion that the strategy for reconciliation as a rule is very specific and has to take into consideration the following:

- There is neither a universal nor regional model for reconciliation; it is mainly a bilateral, not multilateral process.
- It is as a rule deeply rooted in history but oriented to the future.
- Civil societies and non-governmental academic and confessional institutions, media and schools, as well as public diplomacy and independent intellectuals are playing more instrumental roles for reconciliation than traditional inter-governmental diplomacy.
- Reconciliation has to be a de-politicised multidimensional process; in Polish–Russian relations, it required the need to seek not so much compromise but to remove obstacles of the past in the mutual relationship (the truth cannot be the victim of the process but a point of departure in search of mutual respect).
- Only strong and self-confident partners can reconcile; the joint work of an independent group of intellectuals, academicians and experts can achieve more than traditional negotiators.
- The involvement of the broader public and a dialogue among societies, accompanied by symbolic gestures and wisely crafted statements by officials, are decisive for reconciliation, which has to be seen not as a single act (or a series of such acts) but as permanent historical and political, future-oriented efforts.

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Concept

In his book *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (Princeton University Press, 2010), Charles A. Kupchan raised two principal questions: first, through what pathway do states succeed in setting aside their grievances, escape geopolitical competition, and construct a relationship that precludes the prospect of armed conflict? And second, under what circumstances do zones of stable peace form and under what circumstances do they fail?

In short, Kupchan's question is: how, when and why do enemies become friends?

The working group on Historical Reconciliation and Protracted Conflicts established within the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI) offered an approach that goes beyond traditional diplomacy to get at the root causes of the problem and urges a broader strategy for engaging society at large, the level at which solutions must be found. The point of departure for the EASI Report's finding is: "One of the fundamental impediments to molding the Euro-Atlantic nations into a more unified and workable security community ... is the lingering distrust that poisons too many of the region's key relationships." (*Historical Reconciliation and Protracted Conflicts*, EASI Report, Moscow-Brussels-Washington, February 2012). The report's proposal addressed to the EU, Russia and the United States is to declare formally at the OSCE Council that "they accept the responsibility to develop a joint Stewardship Plan for the Twenty-First Century designed to produce functioning Euro-Atlantic Security Cooperation." Overcoming historical grievances requires a broad-based, comprehensive, multilevel process. Such a process has to transcend official diplomatic efforts and engage many different sectors of society in an active dialogue with counterparts from the other side.

Process

The concept of reconciliation is taken in fact from the language of religion.

The leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and Orthodox Church in Russia at the Royal Castle in Warsaw (17 August 2012) called for "forgiveness for the offences, injustice and evil we have caused each other," and noted: "To forgive of course does not mean that we can forget. Memory is an important part of our identity To forgive means to renounce vengeance and hatred to participate in the building up of accord and fraternity between peoples, our nations and countries, which is the foundation of a peaceful future."

It is not by chance that almost a half century ago Polish Catholic bishops set in motion the process of reconciliation with Germany. It was preceded by French–German reconciliation, and more than 20 years ago followed by a similar process initiated in Polish–Lithuanian and Polish–Ukrainian relations. For the process of reconciliation to be effective, it has to be institutionalised and de-politicised.

Quarrels, disputes and conflicts between European states are not a new phenomenon. European history is marked by persistent armed conflicts, occasionally interrupted by longer or shorter periods of peace. Intentional political efforts after World War II to ensure that in-depth social dialogue leads to a lasting elimination of historic animosities between "traditional" enemies constitute a welcome new phenomenon. The relevant dialogue has been augmented by broad educational programs and youth contacts. Relations between France and Germany can serve as a model here: they were not only reinforced by the authority of President de Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer but also gained from institutional forms (e.g., *Jugendwerk*).

To some extent, that experience proved useful in Polish–German relations. The role of the Churches in the two countries is especially praiseworthy in this context; on the German side this particularly applies to the Protestant churches.

Polish–German relations have improved over the past 40 years, not due only to the international law instruments that have been put in place, the operation of newly established numerous joint institutions and the involvement of tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border but, most importantly, thanks to the emergence of a new *community of interests* (prominently including the role played by the first non-communist cabinet of Tadeusz Mazowiecki and the activity of his foreign minister, Prof. Krzysztof Skubiszewski, in promoting the cause of German reunification and, on the German side, the work initiated by Social Democratic Chancellor Willy Brandt and continued by Christian Democrats Helmut Kohl, Angela Merkel and many other German politicians in paving the way for Poland's accession to NATO and the European Union).

The process of reconciliation has many dimensions: political, social and spiritual. It would be hard to overestimate the input of the political elite in both countries and that of the Churches, media and intellectuals—writers, artists, filmmakers.

The psychological dimension is also crucial in the process of reconciliation, for it is a process the ultimate success of which depends on the attitudes of individuals. Reconciliation cannot be decreed. Still, governments do have at their disposal certain instruments that can facilitate a change in attitudes. This includes, for example, the convening of joint panels for the revision of textbooks on current history and school curricula so that new generations can gradually discard nationalist prejudices and stereotypes.

Experience: Poland–Germany and Poland–Russia

The process of reconciliation between Poland and Germany was primarily made possible by the changes that took place in Germany and among Germans. Poland and Poles also changed radically. It has been a qualitative transformation. Yet in order to make these changes irreversible it is essential to institutionalise the whole process and keep making persistent efforts in all possible spheres.

During his visit to Gdansk on the 70th anniversary of World War II (1 September 2009), then-Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin made the following remarks: “The historic, post-war reconciliation between France and Germany paved the way for the establishment of the European Union. In turn, the wisdom and magnanimity of the Russian and German peoples and the foresight of state leaders in both countries made it possible to move decisively in the direction of building a Great Europe. The partnership of Russia and Germany has become an example of meeting half-way and looking to the future, while caringly preserving memory of the past ... I am sure that sooner or later Russian–Polish relations will reach the same high standard of true partnership. This is in the interest of our peoples and the whole of Europe.” (The text of Putin's message was published under the title “Pages of History: Reason for Mutual Grievances or the Basis of Reconciliation and Partnership?” in the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 31 August 2009).

The frequent references to the processes of Germany's reconciliation with France, Russia and Poland might lead to the erroneous conclusion that these countries and Germany have elaborated a certain common model of reconciliation, a kind of *universal* European model. That is not so. The character of Germany's relations with France, Russia and Poland is different in each instance. These relations are the product of the different histories of the states involved, different mentalities of their peoples and totally different interdependencies. In its relations with France, Germany and Germans have had an inferiority complex: Germans—impressed by French civilisation—envied French history and culture. That was connected with the dominance of the

French language in high society and diplomacy and with an admiration for the French lifestyle, literature and high French cuisine. Though Germany was superior in other spheres—in science and technology, labour efficiency, social discipline and legal culture—both the German elite and society at large had an inferiority complex towards France.

That differed from Germany's relations with its eastern neighbours, particularly Poland. Negative, habitual stereotypes of Poles were reflected by such phrases as *polnische Wirtschaft*—denoting mismanagement—or *polnischer Reichstag*—meaning anarchy and tendency to quarrel.

After the Second World War, a persistent irritant in Polish–German relations was the use by German mass media of the term *Polish death camps* with reference to Nazi death camps located during World War II on the territory of occupied Poland (camps that were located in Austria and Germany are described as *Nazi Konzentrationslager*—without the geographic adjective denoting their location). In effect, new generations of German readers were being misled to believe that “Polish” death camps existed during WWII. There are various other minor problems of this kind that irritate Polish public opinion. However, they have never hindered Polish–German reconciliation because the guilt and responsibility of Germany for crimes committed by the Nazi regime has not been questioned. The Third Reich lost the war and the occupying powers imposed the process of de-Nazification of public life. Responsible political forces in Germany worked together to overcome the Nazi past, bring the criminals to justice and establish good relations with all the neighbours in the East and West. As a result, Poland has never had such good relations with Germany as it did after German unification within the Euro-Atlantic security structures and within the European Union.

The point of departure and criteria are quite different in the case of building good neighbourly relations between Poland and Russia. The Soviet Union did not lose the Second World War; on the contrary, it was one of the great victors. For millions of Russians, that victory is inseparably linked with the name of Joseph Stalin. Yet, he was a dictator responsible for countless crimes before the war, during the war and immediately after its conclusion. It was the Russians—and many people of other nationalities inhabiting the Soviet Union—who were the main victims of mass-scale Stalinist crimes, though the citizens of many other states were also targeted.

In other words, the Russian people have a deep sense of having been a victim rather than a perpetrator. From a psychological point of view there is no analogy between the attitude of Germans to Hitler and the NSDAP, and the attitude of Russians to Stalin and the Bolshevik party. It is noteworthy, however, that the dialogue on *difficult matters*, initiated between Poles and Russians, has made it easier for the present Russian leadership to pass judgment on other crimes of the Stalinist regime. Poles, by the way, had long known who in Katyn Forest had murdered the 22,000 Polish officers interned in the USSR after the Red Army invaded Poland on 17 September 1939, in an attack coordinated with Nazi Germany.

The deliberations of the *Polish–Russian Group on Difficult Matters* did not concern mainly facts and events. The facts had been known for years. However, it was important to juxtapose Polish and Russian perceptions and different historical memories on the same facts. A remarkable result was that the Polish and Russian experts had surprisingly convergent views on the most sensitive and difficult issues (e.g., the Katyn Crime, the origin of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Red Army's invasion and incorporation of eastern Poland, etc.). It proved a much tougher task to ensure that the truth, brought to light after 70 years, reached millions of Russians. Making that happen was beyond the power of the Group. Decisions had to be made at the top level—by the Russian president and prime minister. The attitudes of present-day Russians were deeply affected by Andrzej Wajda's film *Katyn*, broadcast on Channel 1 of Russian television and watched by millions of people.

The conclusion here is that the process of reconciliation between Poles and Germans has followed quite a different course than the ongoing dialogue between Poles and Russians. However, recognition of universal moral and political values and truthfulness in addressing the future was pivotal in both cases.

Protracted Conflicts

Finding peaceful, political solutions to the bloody conflicts that erupted within the former Soviet empire (e.g., in the Caucasus, in Transnistria) requires a completely different approach than the process of reconciliation with Poland. In the former case it is the present day rather than history that is the cause of confrontation. We are witnessing here friction between ethnic, national, religious and language groups. Past animosities have come to life, coupled with the aftermath of political decisions by the Bolsheviks, repressions and persecution of minorities, and the uprooting of whole nations (Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Volga Germans), condemned by Stalin to a *collective responsibility* and blamed for their lack of loyalty to the USSR during the German occupation. The communist authorities used similar arguments when justifying mass deportations to Siberia and Central Asia of citizens of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, following the Baltic States' incorporation into the Soviet Union.¹

The findings of American historian Timothy Snyder of Yale University are helpful in better understanding the deep and tragic sources of conflicts in Central-Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In his book *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. (Basic Books, New York 2010), Snyder described the fate of the 14 million non-combatants who lost their lives, being exterminated for political reasons. He writes: "In the middle of Europe, in the middle of the twentieth century, the Nazi and Soviet regimes murdered some fourteen million people. The place where all of the victims died, the bloodlands, extends from central Poland to western Russia, through Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States The fourteen million were murdered over the course of only twelve years, between 1933 and 1945, while both Hitler and Stalin were in power Often what happened to one group is intelligible only in light of what had happened to another. But that is just the beginning of the connections. The Nazi and Soviet regimes, too, have to be understood in light of how their leaders strove to master these lands, and saw these groups and their relationships to one another."

In the process of reconciliation, history matters.

Conclusions

In search of an answer to the question *How Enemies Become Friends?*, Kupchan came to the following conclusion, valuable for the wider Europe: "Regional groupings of the states that enjoy cultural affinity are more likely to cohere as zones of peace than those that cut across ethnic, racial, and religious dividing lines" His most important statement is: "Stable peace *is* possible. Enemies *do* become friends." No single regime type, culture or region has a monopoly on stable peace, meaning that the lessons of his study have potentially universal application.

¹ An interesting comparative analysis on the subject is offered in *The Challenge of Preventive Diplomacy: The Experience of the CSCE*, published by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm, 1994. The authors include the heads of several OSCE missions to Estonia and Transdnistria; also presented are the views of the then-Secretary General of the CSCE, Wilhelm Höynck, and the first CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel. My own experiences are reflected in the essay *In Search of a Political Settlement—The Case of the Conflict in Moldova* published in this volume.

The presented brief analysis leads me to the following conclusions:

- Each and every conflict has its specificity. Conflict prevention and conflict management require a holistic approach: there is a need to take into account the complexity of the situation, with its different layers and dynamics. There is a need to find specific forms of institutionalisation of the reconciliation process.
- One has to avoid what Thorstein Veblen has called *trained incapacities*, i.e., applying the means and mindsets of the Cold War to the qualitatively new political environment's circumstances and requirements. In short, inherited historical distrust has to be replaced by a confidence based on shared interests, transparency and predictability.
- The institutionalization of the dialogue and understanding in the form of functioning newly established Centres for Dialogue and Understanding in Warsaw and Moscow could be seen as innovative and creative instruments in search for reconciliation among the nations. In this process, the role of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches is difficult to overestimate.
- There is a need for more timely and more determined efforts to control an emerging crisis situation. In such situations, the more sustained engagement of the international community is needed. The main challenge now is how to prevent in different form and ways the development of political populism based on aggressive nationalism and chauvinism as the glue consolidating newly established states in a search for their national identity. A political culture of cooperativeness developed within the OSCE, Council of Europe and the EU can and has to be promoted in the Euro-Atlantic Security Community.²
- Multilateral security institutions have to be seen as instruments of national strategies, but should not be inclined to use them in an instrumental way in implementing their own national goals.

² The recently published report by four research centres from France, Germany, Poland and Russia noted that the OSCE's opportunity lies in encouraging new thinking and in testing innovative ideas in a broad communication process with civil society actors, other international organisations and Partner States. Its opportunity lies in starting political projects that strengthen convergence among states and societies and thus clear the way towards a security community." *Towards a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community: From Vision to Reality*, CORE, FRS, PISM, MGIMO, Hamburg, Paris, Warsaw, Moscow, 2012.

East Asia Reconciliations: Main Problems¹

Reconciliation in East Asia has not been achieved yet. Although the countries cooperate with each other in various fields, their painful history and unsettled issues seriously impact relations in the region. The most important problem is China's and Korea's lingering distrust of Japan, strongly associated with Japanese wartime atrocities, which—according to the victims—have not been sufficiently explained, apologized for and repaired.

Despite the fact that in 1995 Japan's prime minister released a statement (known as the Murayama Statement) on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war's end in which he expressed "deep remorse and a heartfelt apology" for "tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations"² and that there are other examples of Japan issuing apologies, the distrust remains.³ The different perceptions among the countries create a very ambiguous situation in which Japan assumes that it has already repeatedly apologized, while the addressees argue that all of these apologies are not sufficient and not sincere enough.

Reconciliation was and still is difficult because the distrust between the states is often used for domestic purposes to gain political popularity. Recently, tensions between Japan and China and Korea have been aggravated in part because Shinzo Abe, who became prime minister of Japan at the end of 2012, presents a rather assertive and nationalistic approach.

Territorial Disputes

One of the most difficult issues to resolve are territorial spats. The most acute dispute between China, Taiwan and Japan concerns the group of uninhabited islands called either Diaoyu or Senkaku in the East China Sea. The row began during the first Sino-Japanese war (1894–1895). The Japanese government argues that the islands were finally incorporated into Japan upon civilians' request to do business on the islands and after 10 years of analyses of the situation. China, however claims that Japan incorporated the islands just before the war with China, which means that under wartime circumstances Beijing was not able to preserve its territorial integrity. This dispute has escalated recently. In September 2012, the Japanese government decided to nationalize three Senkaku islands (in fact, this step was aimed to prevent Tokyo's Governor Shintaro Ishihara, known for his anti-Chinese sentiments, from purchasing islands from their private owners) which, despite the government's intentions, stirred public protests and anti-Japanese sentiments in China. In November 2013, China announced, without prior consultation or first informing, the establishment of the East China Sea Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ), which overlaps Japan's zone and encompasses the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.

There is also a row between Japan and Korea over the Takeshima/Dokdo islands in the Japan Sea. The root of this row dates back to 1900 when Korea declared ownership of the islands.

¹ This part is based on presentations given by the following speakers: Choi Woondo, Kim Minkyu, Marcell Burdelski and Werner Pfennig.

² Statement by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, "On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war's end," 15 August 1995, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html.

³ The example is based on such items as "Ashai Shimbun/Dong-A Ilbo June 2010 Joint Public Opinion Poll." In the poll, to the question "Do you think Japan's colonial rule and other historical problems have been settled or not settled?" 94% of Koreans answered "not settled." To the question, "Do you think Japan has sufficiently apologized for the annexation and colonization of the Korean Peninsula?" 97% of Koreans said "has not sufficiently apologized," and to the question, "Do you think it is necessary or not necessary for Japan to review compensation for victims of colonial rule?" 89% of Koreans responded that it is "necessary to review." The opinion polls shows significant differences in the perception of history.

But 10 years later, the islands were annexed by the Japanese Empire. Japan exercised control over Takeshima until the end of the Second World War. Korea argues that in 1952 the islands returned to the control of South Korea, and since then there has been political tension about the ownership and control of the islands. Relations between Korea and Japan deteriorated in 2012 with Korean President Lee Myung-bak's visit to the disputed islands. This was the first-ever visit to the islands by a Korean president.

Japan's Wartime Deeds

Memories of Japan's wartime atrocities are still present in the collective memories of Koreans and Chinese. This experience is over the last hundred years, when the Japanese Empire was aggressive in its colonization and attempted to conquer East and Southeast Asia. Japan's reign on the Korean Peninsula is remembered as a brutal and cruel time.

One of the most difficult problems is the issue of the sexual abuse of women from the colonized areas by the Japanese army, (a topic inappropriately termed "comfort women") as well as by the Japanese government's recent unclear stance on the problem. The "comfort women" issue was probably one of the most obscure aspects of the Pacific War until 4 August 1993, when Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono acknowledged (in the "Kono Statement") that women—most of them from the Korean Peninsula—had been recruited against their will and forced into prostitution through coaxing and coercion.⁴ Before the statement, the Japanese government had denied that the women had been coerced into prostitution. Despite this statement, some Japanese experts and politicians still try to deny this fact.

Differences in Historical Interpretation

From the Chinese and Korean points of view, Japan still gives the impression of preferring a one-sided interpretation of history, one that is supported by a lack of information and the educational system in Japan. In East Asia, the differences in historical interpretation are truly huge. Japan is often accused by Koreans and Chinese of denying atrocities committed by the Japanese Empire. This problem is particularly strong in textbooks. Japanese textbooks cause controversy in China and Korea due to the lack of information about the problem of "comfort women," the existence of Unit 731 of the Japanese army, which conducted medical experiments on new diseases and weapons using prisoners of war and civilians for tests and other purposes. What is more, for China a very contentious issue is the 1937 Nanjing Massacre and Japan's low estimate of the death toll as well as attempts to mute this issue to whitewash the role of Japan as a perpetrator.

Yasukuni Shrine

Finally, a matter that raises regular tensions in East Asia is the Yasukuni Shrine. This Shinto temple commemorates those who died for the emperor, but including war criminals convicted in the Tokyo trials (1946–1948, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East tried Japanese criminals for wartime deeds). Every visit by the incumbent Japanese prime minister or other high official induces fierce reactions from China and Korea and seriously aggravates tensions with Japan. In December 2013, in celebrating his first year in office, Prime Minister Abe visited the Yasukuni shrine. It was the first visit by an incumbent prime minister since 2006, and Abe was aware that this move would infuriate China and Korea.

⁴ "Statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the result of the study on the issue of 'comfort women'," 4 August 1993, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html.

Polish and European Experiences in Reconciliation¹

Europe is perceived as a continent with successful reconciliation. Nevertheless, there is not one universal European model or standard of reconciliation. Each process requires different codes and different gestures and involves different nations, historical experiences, memories and geopolitical environments. In other words, reconciliation never occurs in isolation. The European reconciliation processes are different from each other. This phenomena is clearly noticeable when taking into account Poland–Germany and Poland–Russia reconciliation. The first has, to some extent, been completed successfully. The latter is still in progress. It seems that the differences lie in a different self-perception of the country's role in the war. Germany was perceived by the others and by itself as a perpetrator, a country that lost the war, and eventually took full responsibility for its wartime atrocities. Russia's case was different. Russia was on the side that won the war and perceives itself only as a war victim, which is used to whitewash the conduct of Russia's secret policy and its army during the war and in the post-war subjugation of Poland.

But despite these conditions and differences, there are some characteristics of European reconciliation that might be perceived, to some extent, as a European rapprochement model.

European Reconciliations: Main Features

A prerequisite for reconciliation is political will based on a de-politicised approach. The process is not to be used for domestic political purposes, such as an attempt to gain political public support. European experiences indicate that reconciliation is a bilateral, not multilateral process. Reconciliation is sufficient if it is founded on two pillars—the state-level and people-to-people contacts. Nevertheless, the state should play a leading role as an initiator because the government is empowered to create a formal framework for political and social activities. In other words, rapprochement requires the establishment of a solid legal foundation in the form of treaties and agreements that can permanently bind both sides. In Europe, the settlement of border and/or territorial disputes as well as war reparations as a first step created a solid foundation for launching bilateral reconciliation talks. Moreover, European experiences proved that reconciliation may be successful if launched by the wartime generation that remembers wartime atrocities and which will do everything it can to protect future generations from a similar tragedy.

In Europe, an indispensable condition for rapprochement has been an admission by the perpetrator of the crimes as well as the victims' willingness to work with the perpetrator in the future. In that sense, both sides do not forget the past but their relations are future-oriented. For example, the Federal Republic of Germany officially announced it was the legal successor of former German states, including Nazi Germany. Germany admitted to being a perpetrator, admitted its guilt and total defeat, as well as took responsibility for wrongdoing during the war. Additionally, apart from the admittance of being a perpetrator, it is important that the victim, despite a painful past, is eager to cooperate with a perpetrator or even to initiate reconciliation.

Such successful reconciliation was possible in Europe because it was seen as indispensable by both sides. Real reconciliation was in their strategic interest. For German–French or German–Poland rapprochement, the common goals were peace, European security, human rights and overcoming divisions in Europe as a result of the Second World War. In that sense, Franco–German reconciliation became a pillar for the European Union, while Polish–German reconciliation was indispensable for the integration of Eastern and Western Europe.

¹ This part is based on presentations given by the following speakers: Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Włodzimierz Borodziej, Kazimierz Wóycicki, Iwona Kozłowska, Werner Pfennig, and Jerzy Sułek.

Reconciliation needs charismatic leaders who have the courage to propose something that often goes against public opinion or expectations or which is perceived as a highly controversial step. In European reconciliation, these leaders were authors of a series of symbolic gestures perceived as signs of government and non-official leaders' willingness to mend relations. They played an important role in society's memories and consciousness. Among them are French Presidents Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou, East German Chancellor Willy Brandt, Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Krzysztof Skubiszewski, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, President of Germany Roman Herzog, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Polish cardinals Bolesław Kominek and Stefan Wyszyński, and many others.

For Europe, a very important role in rapprochement was played by religion, and churches (mainly Catholic and Evangelical denominations). Their role is strongly connected with a conviction that reconciliation is a highly religious concept, linked with such notions as empathy, sin, sense of guilt and forgiveness. What is more, religious institutions and leaders, which were not perceived as state representatives, became initiators and facilitators of improving ties between states.

Here are a few examples of an approach that combines symbolic gestures made by courageous political and religious leaders and the role of religion in Poland–German reconciliation processes:

- 1965: "Pastoral Letter of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers" as an invitation to the millennium celebrations of Poland's Christianisation, with the famous statement "we forgive and we ask for forgiveness" (for the crimes of the Second World War).
- 1970: first official visit by an East German Chancellor—Willy Brandt—to Poland to sign the treaty of non-violence and acceptance of the existing Polish–German border. He visited the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes Monument, where he spontaneously knelt down and remained silent for a short time. This gesture was interpreted as a sign of humility, and the German Chancellor had the courage to do what he thought was appropriate in that place and moment, regardless of the fact that there would be a price to be paid, as almost half of Germans did not support his gesture.
- 1989: Mass of Reconciliation in Krzyżowa, two days after the fall of the Berlin Wall, with a famous sign of peace between German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki. Krzyżowa was one of the main centres of German opposition to the Nazi regime during the war.
- 1994: 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. Roman Herzog, as the first president of a united Germany, asked Poles to forgive German sins.

European experience also showed that reconciliation is smoother if both sides' relations are based on a strong political network, such as forums and institutions that both sides regularly can meet and discuss various issues. In Poland–German relations, this network was created by setting up the Weimar Triangle in 1991, the cooperation formula between Poland, Germany and France. It is also important to include the states' minorities in the process of reconciliation.

Rapprochement Institutionalisation

Reconciliation is a process that has neither a definite end nor is it given once and for all. To preserve the results of the rapprochement, the institutionalisation of this process is required. Poland and Germany established various mechanisms at the state and extra-state levels. There are also mechanisms that support Poland–Russia reconciliation.

On the official state level, in Poland–German relations, both sides cooperate under the framework of intergovernmental consultations, parliamentary contacts, dialogue at foreign ministry

levels, including the Weimar Triangle and the Królewiecki Triangle (Poland, Germany and Russia). Both states have also appointed a plenipotentiary of the government for bilateral cooperation, exchanged civil servants as well as established bilateral governmental institutions, such as the Polish–German Intergovernmental Commission on Regional and Cross-Border Cooperation. There are also self-governmental initiatives such as the Oderpartnership, a cooperation between German Lands and Polish voivodeships as an important source of shared projects in higher education, research and economic matters.

What is more, the Polish–German Textbook Commission has been working since 1972. Its main goals are to prepare recommendations for governments on how to teach history and publish auxiliary materials. A good example of the commission's effectiveness is the fact that there is now information about the 1944 Warsaw Uprising against the Nazis in some German textbooks, though they had been previously absent in German education materials. Nevertheless, it must be underscored that the creation of one, common Polish–German historical memory (supported by one joint history textbook) seems impossible due to different perceptions of the history of the relevant country as a whole. It is important to promote more knowledge of historical perceptions in other countries. These tasks should be undertaken by politicians as well as experts and scientists. There are European institutions focused on such topics, including the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, established in 2005 by the ministers of culture of Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia to promote the study of 20th century history focusing on dictatorial regimes; Center for Historical Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Berlin, established in 2006 and which concentrates on historical and contemporary aspects of Poland–German relations in the European context; and German Historical Institute in Warsaw, established in 1993, which conducts research on the history of Poland and Poland–German relations.

Taking into account the ongoing process of Polish–Russian reconciliation, both countries established two important mechanisms and institutions for bilateral dialogue. In 2002, the Polish–Russian Working Group for Difficult Matters was formally established. After some problems in Poland–Russia relations, its activities resumed in 2008. Now the group is chaired from the Polish side by Prof. Adam Daniel Rotfeld and from the Russian side by Anatoly Vasilyevich Torkunov. What is more, in 2011 Centres for Polish–Russian Dialogue and Understanding were established in Warsaw and Moscow. Their mission is to initiate and support projects undertaken in Poland and Russia to improve dialogue and understanding between the two countries. The centres support academic work and publishing activities as well as educational initiatives.

On the non-governmental level, in Poland–German relations there are the following major institutions and mechanisms: Polish–German Forum, a dialogue platform combining political, social and self-governmental and expert levels; Foundation for Polish–German Reconciliation, which conducted in the past compensation payments for former forced and slave labourers, while at present it engages in historical education and humanitarian aid for the living victims of Nazism; Foundation for Polish–German Cooperation, the Houses of Youth Meetings in Krzyżowa and Oświęcim; and, institutionalised educational cooperation with such institutions as European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), which undertook pioneering actions in higher education, and Collegium Polonicum, established by University Viadrina and A. Mickiewicz University in Poznań and which serves as a model for cross-border academic cooperation. Projects and undertakings of a bilateral nature are co-financed by both countries as part of the Polish–German Foundation for Scholarship.

“Components” that Facilitate the Reconciliation Process

Components	Europe Poland, France, Germany	East Asia PRC, Korea, Japan
Admission of defeat, guilt and responsibility	Admitted by Germany, government and population	Qualified admission by Japan, at times questioned, suffering is stressed.
Like-minded personalities	Adenauer, De Gasperi, de Gaulle, Schumann, Bishop Kominek and Cardinal Wyszyński	If at all, an understanding between Chiang Kai-shek and Kishi Nobusuke, which did not help reconciliation.
Unilateral initiative by victims	Letter from Polish bishops of November 1965	Almost none
Symbolic gestures	Adenauer–de Gaulle, Willy Brandt, Mazowiecki–Kohl, Kohl–Mitterrand	Almost none
Compensation (<i>Wiedergutmachung</i>)	A multitude of German programmes on state and private levels	minimal
Efforts to come to terms with the past (<i>Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung</i>)	Numerous and ongoing. Joint commissions for textbooks. De-Nazification and various educational programs in Germany. A large number of memorials of various kinds	minimal Not enough progress, lack of willingness. In Japan, at times there are provocative acts by leading politicians and partial retractions of past apologies. Lack of knowledge among young people.
“Corresponding” institutions	Churches, political parties, etc.	minimal
Exchanges	Numerous programmes on various levels	minimal
Joint institutions with various functions	Many; for example the Foundation at Kreisau und the Viadrina University in Frankfurt/Oder	minimal
Institutionalised and regular high-level meetings	On various levels, also the “Weimar Triangle” and other forums	not enough
Supportive regional framework, regional integration	NATO, EU and many other institutions	Minimal; regional efforts at cooperation do not include North Korea, no regional integration in East Asia
Settlement of border disputes	Treaties Willingness to search jointly for compromises, e. g., participation of Poland in the Two-plus-Four-Process	No viable settlement, conflicting claims; extensive territorial claims by PRC

Source: Werner Pfennig’s presentation, “Why does reconciliation between nations work in Europe between Poland, Germany and France, and why does it not, not yet, work in northeast Asia between China, Korea and Japan?”

Could the European Experience Be Used for East Asia Reconciliation?

Barriers to East Asia Rapprochement in Light of European Experiences

There are two main challenges for reconciliation in East Asia: an absence of a willingness to reconcile and low political priority attached to reconciliation by governments. What is more, acceptance of guilt is still missing in East Asia, and the relativity or depth of guilt is still a topic for discussion. Past events and historical wrongdoings are often used for domestic purposes and contribute to the rise of nationalism, which is a serious barrier to reconciliation. Still there are no specific symbolic gestures that might be perceived as starting points for mending ties. Apologies made by Japan are often questioned, not only by the victims but also by Japanese politicians, who demand or state the necessity to re-examine them. Discussions in Japan about the number of victims of the Nanjing Massacre or questioning the role of the Japanese army into forcing Asian women into prostitution—even if these initiatives will not result in a modification of the official Japanese government position—preserve the distrust in Korea and China about Japan's sincerity. What is more, in East Asia a victim status is cultivated not only in China and Korea but also in Japan. In that context, Japan underscores it is a victim due to the fact that the country was under pressure to fight against the U.S. and Japan's fight was explained as self-defence. Japan also sees itself as a victim of strategic bombing, including the dropping of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To some extent, the strong Korean and Chinese perception of victimhood seriously narrows room to manoeuvre, such as steps similar to Polish Bishops' letter—a unilateral action initiated by the victim—or makes such a thing almost impossible. Moreover, educational systems are based on a nationalistic approach with underestimates or even whitewashing or shading (using euphemisms) of past wrongdoings, thus limiting the chances of inducing the younger generation to work towards reconciliation. The so called victim mentality based on past suffering leads to policies that seriously hamper reconciliation processes.

Recommendations

- As the word “model” means something to imitate or an example that is transferable and applicable for others to use, in that sense there is not one European reconciliation form that can be simply applied in Asia. Nevertheless, East Asian states, including Korea, should **study various European reconciliation experiences**, including mechanisms and tools, that might serve as inspiration for East Asian reconciliation and that could be adjusted to Asian conditions.
- The Polish–German experiences showed that a prerequisite for reconciliation is settlement of border and territorial issues. Bearing in mind the situation in East Asia and the complexity of unresolved maritime disputes, Korea and Japan should seek regular dialogue and/or implement joint projects in order to resolve (as a final goal), or **at least assuage or mute territorial disputes first**.
- Korea should consider **taking the initiative in reconciliation** with Japan through a symbolic step, which could be taken by a widely respected non-governmental entity, person or group of opinion leaders and which would demonstrate a generous willingness to forgive (e.g., a step similar to the Polish bishops' letter) and to settle old historical problems. Such an initiative might facilitate a reciprocal response from Japan.
- The European reconciliation experience underscores the role of religion as well as charismatic leaders in rapprochement processes. It is worth considering **involving Korean moral, religious and charismatic leaders** (including acting or retired politicians), to take the initiative or launch cooperation on the non-governmental level with their Japanese counterparts.

- Reconciliation requires symbolic, planned or spontaneous **gestures and symbols**, which despite being disputable could be easily memorised as “pictures” of bilateral reconciliation (such as Willy Brandt’s kneeling in front of the Warsaw Ghetto Victims’ monument, Kohl and Mazowiecki’s sign of peace during reconciliation mass in Krzyżowa or Kohl and Mitterand’s meeting in Verdun, where they joined hands as a gesture of friendship, symbolising the lessons learnt from a frightful past). Korea should consider initiating and arranging such steps or meeting in a place that is very important to both sides (as Krzyżowa is for Poland and Germany, Verdun for Germany and France) and the joint commemoration of difficult anniversaries (e.g., liberation of the Nazi German Concentration Camp at Auschwitz, the Warsaw Uprising, or the beginning of the Second World War) in order to create a great narrative for both sides to become a symbol of reconciliation.
- Reconciliation needs **extraordinary long-term decisions** that at the first sight seem to be going further than expected. In the Poland–German case, a good example was the Polish proposal in the early 1990s prepared by the MFA for Poland and Germany to conduct joint military drills (at that time, Poland was still a member of the Warsaw Pact with USSR troops still on its territory) or the establishment of a joint German–Polish university. Korea should suggest such a long-term proposal for Korea–Japan reconciliation, including joint initiatives, mechanisms and institutions, even if they seem to be controversial.
- In Polish–German experience, an important role in reconciliation was played by **meetings** of such groups as Polish **war victims** (e.g., prisoners of concentration camps) with Germans from the **young generation**. A similar step should be undertaken in East Asia between Korean victims of Japan’s militarism and young Japanese people and their leaders.
- Although history cannot be changed and atrocities forgotten, it is worth **knowing the historical perception of the other side** to understand their feelings and **eliminate a deficit in historical knowledge, myths, half-truths and mutual hostility**. The lack of knowledge about the past is a serious barrier to reconciliation. The Polish–German Joint Textbook Commission showed that the identification of different perceptions by publishing recommendations about how to teach history, and then preparing auxiliary materials for teachers were proper steps that facilitated reconciliation. Bearing in mind that Japan, Korea and China have experience with a joint textbook commission (2002–2005, 2007–2012), it seems reasonable for it to resume its work and to focus on preparing auxiliary materials for teachers. The proposal announced by South Korean President Park Geun-hye to work together to publish a joint textbook is a good step towards reconciliation. Taking into account the fact that it is very difficult to publish one joint history textbook or create common historical memory, as each side has different interpretation of history, a regular meeting of Korea, Japan and China (or through a bilateral framework) to prepare teaching tips and auxiliary materials that highlight differences in historical perception would seem to be very helpful. Apart from educational initiatives, other useful steps include historical exhibitions, education packages for schools, publications translated into foreign languages, etc.
- Taking into account the differences in the European and Asian environments, uniqueness of reconciliation processes in general, and insufficient knowledge in Asia about European reconciliation efforts and results, it seems useful to establish an **informal study group** on the expert level to advise the Korean government. The study group could have a bilateral (Korean–Polish) or trilateral (Polish–German–Korean) setup from the very beginning. The study group preferably should not work in public and its report should be informal and confidential. Later on, it could be considered when necessary and how to invite the Japanese side into the group.
- The study group might also **prepare a report** exploring the possibilities—in security, politics, economy, finance, culture and the human dimension—for beginning new rapprochement in East Asia (especially between Korea and Japan). The Polish and German experiences with reconciliation after the Second World War (especially 1989/90 to 2014) should be a source of inspiration for this purpose.

Seminar Agenda

Polish Experience in Reconciliation: A Model for Rapprochement in East Asia?

13 March 2014 (Thursday), 09:15–15:45

Przeździecki Palace
6 Foksal Street, Warsaw

09:15–09:45 **Welcoming Coffee**

09:45–10:00 **Opening Remarks**

Marcin Zaborowski, Director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs

Young Sun Paek, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Poland

Hyun-seok Yu, President of the Korea Foundation

10:00–10:15 **Opening Statement**

Katarzyna Wilkowiecka, Deputy Director of the Department of Asia and Pacific Region, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

10:15–10:45 **Keynote Speech**

Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Co-Chairman of the Polish–Russian Group on Difficult Matters

10:45–12:45 **Session 1. Historical Grievances in Europe and East Asia and Conditions for Reconciliation**

Topics for discussion: unresolved historical and territorial disputes in East Asia and in Korea–Japan relations; historical overview of the situation in Europe after the Second World War and Polish–German as well as Polish–Soviet relations at the time; factors facilitating and undermining reconciliation in Asia and Europe

Speakers:

Choi Woondo, Policy Team Director, Northeast Asian History Foundation

Włodzimierz Borodziej, Institute of History, University of Warsaw

Kazimierz Wóycicki, Institute of East European Studies, University of Warsaw

Marceli Burdelski, Center for East Asian Studies, University of Gdansk

Chair:

Łukasz Kulesa, Head of the Non-proliferation and Arms Control Project, Polish Institute of International Affairs

12:45–13:45 Buffet Lunch

13:45–15:45 **Session 2. Reconciliation Mechanisms in East Asia and Europe**

Topics for discussion: mechanisms and arrangements employed in Polish-German and Polish-Russian rapprochement processes; assessment of these mechanisms as important tools in Poland's foreign and neighbourhood policy; reconciliation mechanisms and tools adopted in East Asia, especially in Korea

Speakers:

Kim Minkyu, Research Fellow, Northeast Asian History Foundation

Iwona Kozłowska, European Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

Werner Pfennig, Institute of Korean Studies, Department of History and Cultural Studies, Freie Universität Berlin

Jerzy Sułek, Warsaw Customs and Logistics College, former President of the German-Polish Reconciliation Foundation

Chair:

Piotr Kościński, Coordinator of the Eastern and South Eastern Europe Programme, Polish Institute of International Affairs

15:45 **Concluding Remarks**

Kim Hoekil, Director, Korea Foundation, Moscow Office

Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar, analyst, Polish Institute of International Affairs

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