

Hereditary Democracy in Japan and its Effects on War Memory

Since the defeat of Japan in the Second World War, the issue of how the war is remembered among the people and politicians of Japan has been central to Japanese nationalism, elections, and domestic and international politics. An important component of the remembrance of the war is how to treat the issue of “comfort women,” or forced sex slave workers. Japan has been quite intractable in their position of refusal to officially apologize for the war atrocities, leaving many to question why, especially those from the affected countries. Japan, with its conservative Liberal Democratic Party that has dominated post-war Japan almost to the degree of creating a one-party system, allows grandchildren of World War II warmongers and war criminals to represent the country as politicians. This system of hereditary democracy makes progress on apologies and war responsibility close to impossible, as these generational leaders cannot apologize and disgrace their forebears.

In this paper I will explore the implications of the Japanese political system of hereditary democracy and show how it has contributed to the current day controversy of this refusal to apologize. To prove this I will first define and explain the term hereditary democracy. I will then prove that this system exists in Japan today, first drawing on data about current and past politicians, to see their generational link. Then I will further give evidence of this Japanese political phenomenon through the case study of Abe Shinzō (Prime Minister 2006-2007), who been chosen as Prime Minister again after LDP victory in general elections of December 16, 2012, and his grandfather Kishi Nobusuke (Prime Minister 1957-1960). I will show how Kishi Nobusuke, heralded the creator of the

conservative LDP, passed on his ideological and political principles to his grandson Abe Shinzō, considered by some the only true LDP leader of his generation due to his ultra-nationalism and conservatism. I will show how both these conservative leaders have tried to fulfill a mission to “recover a sense of national pride” to Japan that they associate with denial of any sort of apology for World War II, and illustrate how this goes beyond just a simple focus on the nation, because it also seeks to preserve a positive image of their late family members and the memory of their role in World War II. These cross-generational Japanese politicians and their national and personal identities blur together, which is also reflected in the support they generate from their people. Lastly, addressing the origins of that support I will postulate that like these politicians, the Japanese people also grapple with disassociating their personal identity from national identity, contributing to ongoing support of the LDP party and therefore their hereditary candidates.

Defining Hereditary Democracy in Japan

In Japan, just as in Western societies, there is the expression, “like father like son.”¹ More so than in many other cultures, a son is expected to follow in his father’s footsteps. This plays out over and over again in Japanese politics. Bruce Cumings, an American historian who has studied Japanese post-war politics and memory, asserts that 70 to 80 percent of parliamentarians have inherited seats from their fathers or come from politically prominent families.² This phenomenon he termed hereditary democracy. Hereditary democracy can be defined as a democratic political system, in which the populace is free to vote how they choose, however, this yields a majority of politicians whose positions are hereditary in the sense that their family has a past in politics.

¹ Fukuda, Hiroshi. "Why Are There So Many Hereditary Politicians in Japan?" *Asia-Pacific Review* 16.2 (2009), P. 1.

² Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History*, P.89

Although Japan has a democracy, every election year a large portion of Diet seats are turned over to politicians whose families are or were also representatives in the Diet. Prime Ministers have also often had close ties to prior prime ministers. In 1990, the general election yielded 45% of Diet members related to current or previous Diet members.³ In the 2009 elections, 53% of the elected Diet were said to be “hereditary politicians.”⁴ When looking further at statistics, one can see that 70% of these “hereditary politicians” win their races.⁵ Direct successions are very common. When a politician retires, 21% of the time a relative succeeds. When a politician dies, 40% of the time his successor is also a relative.⁶ Although this phenomenon in Japan is not exclusive to the dominant LDP party, political scientists Ishibashi and Reed assert that the LDP is made up mostly of second generational members who recognize this phenomenon and try to continue it, running multiple second-generational candidates in districts, sometimes even politicians who come from the same families.⁷

Comfort Women: Who They Were and Their Demand for an Apology

The comfort women issue and its role in the war memory disputes between Japan and countries it occupied in World War II have recently become an important controversies in the international arena. Historians now believe some 200,000 women, many Korean and Chinese but also Filipinos and Europeans, were forced to serve as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers. For many decades Japan has refused to acknowledge military involvement, often just arguing the women were prostitutes and the comfort

³ Ishibashi, Michihiro. “Second-Generation Diet Members and Democracy in Japan.” *Asian Survey*. Vol. 32, No. 4 (April 1992). P. 366.

⁴ Fukuda, Hiroshi. “Why Are There So Many Hereditary Politicians in Japan?” *Asia-Pacific Review* 16.2 (2009), P. 1.

⁵ Ishibashi, Michihiro. “Second-Generation Diet Members and Democracy in Japan.” *Asian Survey*. Vol. 32, No. 4 (April 1992). P. 276

⁶ *Ibid*, 372.

⁷ *Ibid*, 387.

stations were brothels and therefore private enterprises.⁸ This is not just due to Japanese government officials alone, for when the United States conducted the Tokyo War Crimes tribunal the issue of comfort women was entirely ignored. During the time, both the United States and Japan were preoccupied with helping the Japanese victims of war, as 6.5 million Japanese were stranded overseas and the country devastated from the atomic bombings and other acts of warfare.⁹ Since the 1980s, however, when the first accounts of Asian military comfort women's experiences of sexual slavery were heard directly from the mouths of survivors, Japan has had ample time to admit its part in the atrocities.

While the issue remains unresolved, as emphasized by the recent erection of a comfort women statue right in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul (which Prime Minister Noda asked to be removed but was only faced with refusal), both South Korea and Japan have grappled to end the controversy. After the 1980s and the "breaking of silence" by many survivors, several lawsuits started with the goal of confirming Japan's legal responsibility and consequentially compensation burdens. In all lawsuits the plaintiffs, ie., the comfort women survivors, lost their case.¹⁰ In 1992, a Japanese historian, Yoshiaki Yoshimi, angered by the government denials, uncovered documents that proved there was military involvement with the comfort stations. Following the presentation of this evidence the government issued a declaration in 1993 that was deemed unsatisfactory to most of the survivors because it was issued by Yohei Kono, the chief cabinet secretary and not adopted by Parliament. This declaration also only took responsibility for the setting up of the stations and then established a private,

⁸Onishi, Norimitsu. "Abe Rejects Japan's Files on War Sex," *The New York Times*. 1 March 2007. Onishi, Norimitsu. "Japan Again Denies Role in Sex Slavery," *The New York Times*. 26 March 2007.

⁹ Seraphim, Franziska. *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006. P. 6.

¹⁰ Hirofumi, Hayashi. "Disputes in Japan Over the Japanese Military "Comfort Women" System And Its Perception In History." *The Annals of the American Academy*. 617, May 2008. P. 129

nongovernment fund to compensate the women. Many survivors even refused to take money from this private fund as they saw it as charity and not compensation.¹¹

Two more positive events for the comfort women that followed were the Women's International War Crimes on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery held in Tokyo in 2000 and the 2007 US Congress resolution urging an official apology from Japan to the states and individuals affected by the comfort women station establishments. The Tribunal of 2000 was quite successful. It allowed the largest number of survivors ever to meet in one place and had over 1,000 attendees. The result of the trial, which the right wing of Japan always refers to as a mock trial, was the conviction of ten Japanese officials including Emperor Hirohito.¹² The US Congress resolution of 2007 asked Japan to "formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner."¹³ Both events were heavily supported overseas by both media and general public, but in Japan criticized by the right-wing LDP and its supporters and covered in a biased way by the mass media.

None of these events received much recognition in Japan, and were in fact mostly the driving forces behind counter-movements to empower right wing conservatives such as Abe Shinzō. While the mid 1980s and 1990s seemed to begin the opening for an acknowledgement of the comfort women history, the counterattack to "recover a sense of national pride" arguably erased all progress. Finally the issue of comfort women had been added to textbooks, only to be utterly eliminated by 2006 after the Minister of Education

¹¹Onishi, Norimitsu. "Abe Rejects Japan's Files on War Sex," *The New York Times*. 1 March 2007. Onishi, Norimitsu. "Japan Again Denies Role in Sex Slavery," *The New York Times*. 26 March 2007.

¹²Matsui, Yayori. "Women's International Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery." *East Asia*. Winter 2001. P. 120

¹³Hirofumi, Hayashi. "Disputes in Japan Over the Japanese Military "Comfort Women" System And Its Perception In History." *The Annals of the American Academy*. 617, May 2008. P. 129.

announced it was desirable for references to Japanese atrocities to be dropped.¹⁴ Soon, students and scholars studying Japanese history came to understand that the difference between acknowledging and denying the place of comfort women in Japanese war memory as the difference between the “liberal historical view” (actually the right wing revisionist force) and the “masochistic historical view” (the more liberal and comfort women supporter intellectuals).¹⁵ This environment at the beginning of the 21st century made it all the easier for Abe Shinzō to step in and attempt to “bring back honor” to those involved in the war, such as his grandfather Kishi Nobusuke.

Abe Shinzō’s Denial

In early March of 2007, following a resolution that accused Japan of coercing comfort women, introduced to Congress by Congressmen Honda, Abe announced that no evidence existed to show that any women were “forcibly” recruited. He went on to elaborate that he meant forcible in the narrow sense of the word. He also addressed both the accusations of coercion and of the 1993 declaration, saying “There is no evidence to prove there was coercion, nothing to support it. So, in respect to this declaration, you have to keep in mind that things have changed greatly.”¹⁶ With nations angered around the world, three weeks later he had to apologize but still did not retract what he said. Abe made the following statements: “I apologize here and now” (not saying what he is apologizing for) and “I express my sympathy toward the comfort women and apologize for the situation they found themselves in.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid, 128.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Fackler, Martin. “Japanese Researchers Rebut Premier’s Denials on Sex Slavery,” *The New York Times*. 18 April 2007.

¹⁷ Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History*, P.89

As Tessa Morris-Suzuki points out in her analysis of Abe's comments, according to Abe, in order for this comfort system to involve rape and other horrendous crimes it would have to involve "officials forcing their way into houses like kidnappers and taking people away."¹⁸ Abe's definition of forcible is quite interesting considering his great campaign to condemn North Korea for its abduction of about seventeen Japanese citizens. As political scientist Hirofumi eloquently explains, had Abe "applied the narrow sense of coercion, meaning only coerced abductions that were carried out by agents of the North Korean state, none of the Japanese citizens removed to North Korea would be considered abductees."¹⁹ When confronted with this hypocritical standpoint Abe's response was, "The issue of the abductees is an ongoing violation of human rights," he said, adding: "The 'comfort women' issue is not ongoing."²⁰ Again, this is far from true, as sex slavery is still a prominent global issue, and one reason why women across the world have joined the comfort women movement seeking recognition and compensation. Given this hypocrisy, and the overwhelming amount of evidence presented to Abe and other politicians about the existence of the comfort women system, this denial reads as a desperate attempt to keep forebears like Kishi untarnished and nationalist Japanese politics alive.

Following in his grandfather's footsteps, Abe's goals were to uphold a positive war memory and ensure that his grandfather and his generation of leaders were not tainted by the movements for Japan to take responsibility for war atrocities in the form of an acknowledgment and apology for the harm caused. When Abe said he was "sorry for

¹⁸ Morris-Suzuki, Tessa. "Japan's 'Comfort Women': It's Time for the Truth." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. 8 March 2007.

¹⁹ Hirofumi, Hayashi. "Disputes in Japan Over the Japanese Military 'Comfort Women' System And Its Perception In History." *The Annals of the American Academy*. 617, May 2008. P. 129.124.

²⁰ Zeller Jr., Tom. "The Politics of Apology For Japan's 'Comfort Women'." *The New York Times*. 5 March 2007.

the situation they (the comfort women) found themselves in” he is shifting responsibility away from Japan. Assuming responsibility would mean Abe was directly putting blame on his grandfather, his ultimate hero, and also Japanese LDP supporter’s hero, something he cannot do. At the same time, he appears to be trying to not directly contradict past Japanese politicians, even though they were not LDP members, as in the case of Kono, who issued the 1993 declaration. He does this by mentioning the resolution and showing signs of at least minimal sympathy. He also tailors his definition of “forcibly” to a narrow sense, one that works well with his strategy of denial. Lastly, he is trying to cast a shadow of doubt on that declaration and the testimony heard during the 2000 sexual slavery tribunal and in the history report of 1992. He accomplishes this by emphasizing the significance of evidence, given there is little physical evidence of the comfort woman atrocities, as is true in many sexual abuse cases. By signaling there is no evidence of coercion, he is also attempting to exonerate his grandfather and other war leaders of that generation who had come under fire again during the tribunal and US resolution.

Kishi Nobusuke

Kishi Nobusuke has sometimes been termed the prime minister who exited prison only to head to the Prime minister’s residence, “literally to exchange his prison uniform for a business suit.”²¹ Kishi had been the head of munitions in Manchuria before the war, and as Minister of Commerce and Industry from 1941-45, Tōjō Hideki’s closest deputy. After being imprisoned in Sugamo prison as a Class A War Criminal he was released on December 24, 1948 without being indicted or tried.²² Kishi, in his prison diary, described the war crimes trial as a farce and would devote the rest of his political life to undoing its

²¹ Samuels, Richard J. “Kishi and Corruption: An Anatomy of the 1955 System.” *Japan Policy Research Institute*. Working Paper No. 83, December 2001.

²²Bix, Herbert P. Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan. New York, NY: Perennial, 2001. P. 634.

effects.²³ Postwar liberals were extremely shocked as they began to see people such as Kishi taking back power.²⁴ Men like Kishi were not only taking back power, they were widening it. Kishi and others selected parts of the discredited prewar world of ultra-nationalist politicians and changed them to suit a world of postwar conservative hegemony. He harnessed the support of the masses of war bereaved families who wanted and received not only physical compensation for their dead loved ones, but a national narrative that did not condemn the ones they had lost. The Japan Association of War-bereaved Families was founded in 1953 and became Japan's foremost conservative group. The Association families first suffered hardships when they did not immediately win the social welfare benefits they were seeking and they also passionately believed that they needed to restore the honor of their lost loved ones. Members of the Association, on occasion, will camp out in front of politicians offices until they succumb to their demands. For example, when Prime Minister Horokawa labeled World War II as an aggressive war, the group protested outside his office and later denounced his statements, claiming the war was a war of self-defense. They were a great source of support for Kishi and still are for Abe, and they have opposed any acknowledgement of wartime atrocities and even more ardently supported LDP work to restore honor to their late relatives. They are sometimes accused of being a cult of the war dead.²⁵

As Japan specialist Seraphim states, "It is worth pointing out that Japanese people were well acquainted with the political potential of public memory by the time the war ended." After all, a main way of raising support for the initiatives that started World War II was generating national pride about the victories of the Sino-Japanese and the Russo-

²³ Ibid, 612.

²⁴ Seraphim, Franziska. War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006. P. 21

²⁵ Ibid, 60-80.

Japanese wars.²⁶ Among Kishi's many goals was securing the release of class B and C war criminals who were imprisoned for torture, rape and murder. Kishi argued, "their early parole and pardon, would make it easier for Japan to forget the past and move closer to the United States." Presented with this argument during the beginning of the US Cold War and military initiative in Korea, Eisenhower agreed to secure Japan as an ally and expedited the release of the criminals.²⁷ This policy, alongside Kishi's eagerness to revise the Japanese constitution to enable to rearmament, defined the aggressive nature of the LDP party as Japan entered an era of real recovery followed by high growth.

Seraphim also points out another aspect of historical memory and the role of politicians in its evolution in Japan. She writes, "progressive scholars of Japan's history of memory have long pointed out that the manner in which the Japanese government concluded international treaties (geared primarily toward furthering US military interests in the Cold War) in effect sanctioned the shelving of Japan's war responsibility issues."²⁸ This is evident in Kishi's foreign policies. In return for protection and sheltering from war responsibility, Kishi arranged for the US-Japan Security Treaty to be renewed in 1960. He was so aggressive about the renewal of the treaty that his enemies and even some of his conservative allies were able to oust him from power in the aftermath. But Kishi still practically got away with murder, literally, during the renewal period. Protests broke out all over the country in the spring of 1960. One student protest led to the death of a student, Kanba Michiko, killed by the riot police.²⁹ Kishi also ensured the renewal by physically removing opposing Diet members from their seats. It is also suspected he

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Bix, 660.

²⁸ Seraphim, Franziska. *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006. P. 19-20.

²⁹ Ibid, 178

carried out terrorist acts, hiring right wing hit men to strike leftist Diet members and intimidating opponents of the treaty.³⁰ Once out of power Kishi did not lead much of a political life, but he did propose in 1982 to erect a monument on top of Mount Fuji honoring the Japanese who had worked in Manchuria, showing he had not given up on the battle for a positivist war memory.³¹

Abe Shinzō

To understand Abe Shinzō's role, we must contextualize his entrance into the war memory issues given the passage of decades of time. The period between 1960 when Kishi resigned and 2006 when Abe was elected prime minister did witness change in the dialogue about war responsibility, specifically regarding comfort women as witnesses and evidence emerged in the 1980s. About the time of the declaration of 1993 discussed above, the LDP political party had suffered a collapse of power, further making progress for the memory of the war to change. Feminist movements in Asian countries affected by the Japanese comfort women stations also paved a path for change on the issue.³² Along with the Kono statement, by the 1990s several politicians (and occasionally the emperor himself) had issued apologies to the affected countries. With the LDP party out of power, Socialist Party Prime Minister Hosokawa became the first prime minister to publicly refer to Japan's war in Asia as aggressive and offer condolences.³³ This created a fervor on the part of nationalists and conservatives to get the LDP back into power. By 2005 the LDP was strong once again and pushing for many of its same goals. Abe Shinzō was able to run for Prime Minister and sustain a victory.

³⁰ Johnson, Chalmers. *Japan, Who Governs? The Rise of the Development State*. New York: Norton, 1995. P. 667

³¹ *Ibid*, 259.

³² Seraphim, Franziska. *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006. P. 26.

³³ *Ibid*, 275.

In her book, Seraphim argues that the US-Japan security relationship and constitutional revision represent the two longest standing issues on which war memory has depended since end of occupation in 1952. Therefore, despite their different time periods in office, because Kishi and Abe fought for the same results on these two issues, they both used the same techniques to preserve their narrative of World War II. Abe, during his earlier time in office, and now as he starts his new Prime Ministership, stands on a platform of constitutional revision mainly through the elimination of Article 9 which would result in the rearming of Japan. Also, upon entering the Diet in 1993, he made an effort to join ultrarightist groups related to the interpretation of history.³⁴ Even aside from the policy dimension, Kishi's influence on Abe is obvious. As a campaigning politician, Abe spoke much about his intellectual devotion to his grandfather Kishi, working off the fact that Kishi was still the party's favorite reference point among LDP older conservatives. Abe, described as he entered politics, "he believes that Japan's war and behavior of the Japanese military were righteous, and hence he began efforts to recover his grandfather's honor by fighting back against new research and subsequent campaigns." Abe Shinzō's book, *Toward a Beautiful Nation*, passionately argues that Class A War Criminals, which of course includes Kishi, were not war criminals in the eyes of domestic law. Although this historic stance immediately alarmed Japan's neighboring governments, as the new face of conservatism, Abe received 60-70 percent of public support, earning him the title at one point of Japan's true "postwar" political leader.³⁵ Once elected, Abe worked to "reform" Japan, pushing for traditional LDP ideas of nationalism. He also devoted much time to bridging the relationship of the government

³⁴ Hirofumi, Hayashi. "Disputes in Japan Over the Japanese Military "Comfort Women" System And Its Perception In History." *The Annals of the American Academy*. 617, May 2008. P. 129

³⁵ Smith, Sheila. "The Politics of Leaving the "Postwar" Behind: Nationalism, Pragmatism and Japan's Foreign Policy. P. 99.

to families of the kidnap victims of the North Korean abduction.³⁶ His time in office was very short as he quit in September 2007, only about five months after his denial of the comfort women issue. He cited health reasons but many connect his resignation with the international disgust about his denials. He campaigned successfully for the election held on December 16, 2012, which the LDP won by a landslide. He is in the process of forming his cabinet and his policy goals for his second period as Prime Minister.

**An Analysis of Abe Shinzō's Denial and the Implications of Hereditary Democracy
for Japan**

It can be argued that both the Japanese people, heavily LDP supporters, and Abe Shinzō have the same political heroes: men like Kishi Nobusuke who remind them of the strong Japan of World War II and of the 1960s, each a time when Japan was powerful in different ways. Kishi, as he sat in prison, schemed ways to make Japan powerful again and restore the national pride that was taken in defeat and occupation. He could rely on his knowledge that the Japanese people felt the same way he did, humiliated and victimized. The war in Japan had affected everyone. At war's end, 1.74 million servicemen had died and about the same amount of civilians, 4.5 million soldiers were wounded or ill, 6.5 personnel/civilians needed repatriation and .9 million were homeless. Every family had a relative killed in combat or US bombings, and all families were economically devastated. The popularity of organizations such as the Association for War Bereaved Families exemplifies the power behind this type of sorrow. Even in the rare instance of an unscathed family, it shared in the sense of victimhood because Japanese were now under the occupation of the United States. US forces, as Seraphim argued, only helped shelve responsibility and promote the victim narrative, as shown with

³⁶ Ibid, 95.

Eisenhower's permission for the exoneration of war criminals in the late 1950s. This comforting narrative of wartime suffering of the Japanese was very popular at the time of occupation. Sixty years later, the Japanese lay person has little incentive to change the narrative of the war history from that of victimhood to one of perpetuation of atrocities. The Japanese people are again buying into the LDP, even with its undemocratic, unchanging political families that dominate the political scene, because this allows them to keep the narrative of Japan they wanted in the 1950s when Kishi first came to power, the same narrative they still want in place today.

The more pressure other forces exert on Japanese politicians to apologize for these events, the more fervently they deny them. Larger demand for an apology shapes larger, at least from the LDP, Japanese opposition for an apology. The comfort woman movement has support from women on a global scale. The pressure for Japan to apologize came from these women, and ultimately prompted the statements made by the comfort memorial outside Japan's own embassy in Seoul, the 2000 tribunal, the 1993 Kono declaration and lastly the 2007 resolution. It almost seems as if the progress of awareness and support for the comfort women reached too high a point, and had to be countered by new Japanese nationalism and almost retracted. This is also the case for the movements to have textbooks include the history of comfort women: when they became successful, officials interfered to stop the progress. The success of the comfort woman movement directly interferes with the LDP mission to restore national pride. It goes against the preferred narrative offered by LDP's Kishi and Abe, a narrative that although uniform for the nation is also personal in nature and therefore it is hard to admit any negative memory that would affect a Japanese person's individual identity.

The comfort woman case study, with an emphasis on Kishi and Abe's actions, also shows how the national and personal identities of the politicians become inseparable when dealing with apologies and assumption of responsibility. Kishi could not embrace a personal identity for himself as war criminal and so he worked to make the national identity of Japan be that of victim. Abe cannot allow the national identity of Japan to change from victim to aggressor because he does not want his personal identity that is inevitably linked to his grandfather to be tainted as well. Once again, the Japanese people manifest some of this behavior as well and not just because they support and elect politicians like Abe. The media did not adequately cover the tribunal in Tokyo, the US resolutions, or the feminist movements. It seems that, if nothing can be said that is positive for Japan, nothing should be reported at all.

Japan Today: What Does It Mean?

Hirofumi, in a Japanese political analysis, asserted in 2007 that, "Abe's recent position as prime minister demonstrates that ultrarightists have taken over the Liberal Democratic Party and the Japanese government."³⁷ Many must have been able to breathe a sigh of relief when Abe resigned abruptly months later and the Democratic Party took power. But it seems to be that Abe and Abe-like-minded politicians are back wielding political power. This February, Nagoya mayor Takashi Kawamura announced that he doubted that the infamous Rape of Nanking had actually occurred, despite the fact that Nagoya's sister city is Nanking and the two cities had had a close "sistership." Kawamura also cited a familial source, asserting his father had visited Nanking eight years after the alleged massacre only to be greeted warmly. He argued this was evidence

³⁷ Hirofumi, Hayashi. "Disputes in Japan Over the Japanese Military "Comfort Women" System And Its Perception In History." *The Annals of the American Academy*. 617, May 2008. P. 124

that the mass murders and rapes did not occur. The connection between the two cities was cancelled immediately.³⁸ And what is worse, Abe is back. Recently Abe announced his wish to run for prime minister, saying, “We are going to win back Japan and build a strong country, a prosperous country.” Abe won LDP leadership after defeating four candidates on the party ballot, and on December 16, his Prime Ministership was confirmed by an LDP landslide in the general election. The outgoing prime minister and leader of the opposing party, Yoshihiko Noda of the Democratic Party, did not gain as much support as Abe mostly due to the handling of the Fukushima incident over one year ago.³⁹ Although Abe appears to be focusing on the fixing of the economy as he resumes office, analysts predict him to soon bring back out his nationalist attitudes, particularly with the Senkaku Island dispute that he has already made his position clear on. Abe, with little regard to angering China, has announced the issue is not negotiable and demands the islands.⁴⁰ The reelection of Abe portends a return to the fervent denials of Japanese war responsibility. It will also continue the cycle of hereditary democracy in Japan.

Hereditary democracy in Japan, perpetuated by the dominant conservative LDP party, is a true threat to a more truthful and moral Japanese war memory. As Japan keeps electing the descendants of war criminals such as Abe, the tension between Japan and its neighbors will only continue or increase. Those who faced Japan’s atrocities will leave this world with no compensation, or worse, even apologies for what they faced over 65 years ago. Furthermore, how can an LDP second or third generation Diet member or Prime Minister truly lead a country with a clear mind when there are such personal attachments about how to regard the wars of the past? The system of hereditary

³⁸Fackler, Martin. “Chinese City Sever Ties After Japanese Mayor Denies Massacre.” *The New York Times*. 22 Feb, 2012.

³⁹Tabuchi, Hiroko. “Former Prime Minister in Japan Elected to Lead Opposition Party.” *The New York Times*. 26 Sept. 2012. Tabuchi, Hiroko. “Incoming Leader’s Plan: Not Repeating His Errors.” *The New York Times*. 17 Dec 2012.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

democracy in Japan is inherently flawed, because change and balance are too difficult to come by, when politicians such as Abe have personal motives behind the stances they take on policies. With Abe returning to power, we will most likely see a return to the Kishi-Abe mission: “to restore honor and national pride to Japan” or to describe this from a more leftist view, to continue to cleanse Japan of any responsibility for World War II and exonerate pronounced war criminals.