Reconsidering the Comfort Women Case: Inherited Responsibility as Civic Responsibility*

Jun-Hyeok Kwak**
Eon-joo Park***

In this paper, we present civic responsibility with reciprocal non-domination as a viable solution for the “comfort women” issue in South Korea. Specifically, we will carry out the following two tasks: First, by applying the predominant theories of inherited responsibility to the comfort women case, we show that these theories are insufficient in terms of the “agent” taking inherited responsibility and the “scope” of its recompense. Second, by elaborating reciprocal non-domination as a regulative principle through which all citizens can acknowledge the need for preventing similar injustices in the future, we argue that civic responsibility would be more applic-
able to the comfort women case, particularly in the context of inherited responsibility.

**Key Words:** Inherited Responsibility, “Comfort Women,” Civic Responsibility, Reciprocal Non-domination, National Responsibility

---

I. Introduction

The “comfort women” case has been a polemic issue in the context of inherited responsibility that responsibility for historical injustices committed by previous generations can be, and is, inherited to the next generation.¹ The Japanese government, which played the role of the agent responsible for wartime atrocities, tends to either deny the rationale for any collective responsibility or limit the extent of such responsibility in terms of recompense and non-financial measures. In contrast, South Korea, which has demanded from Japan an official apology and the acknowledgement of historical wrongdoings, has been dependent on the argument that nations should be held accountable for historical injustices committed by their previous generations. However, the disadvantage of this claim is that an excessive focus on nationalism might humiliate the victims and hinder a thick reconciliation with Japan.

Based on these observations, this paper presents civic responsibility with reciprocal non-domination as a viable suggestion for the “comfort women” issue in South Korea. Specifically, we intend to accomplish the following aims. First, we review the theories of inher-

---

1. The term “comfort women” refers to those women (Koreans, Filipinos, Indonesians, and Vietnamese among others) who were coerced or deceived into providing sexual services for the Japanese military during the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific War (1937-1945). While we fully understand the feminist motivation to use the term “sexual slave” instead of the “comfort women,” we decided to avoid the former expression because it might cause unnecessary humiliation or embarrassment to the victims.
ited responsibility and argue that they are not sufficiently applicable
to the “comfort women” issue. Two considerations are proposed with
regard to the “agent” bearing the inherited responsibility and the
“scope” of recompense. The first consideration involves holding
either the state or the nation responsible, whereas the second consid-
eration examines the various attempts to alleviate the victims’ pain
and suffering associated with the historical injustices. Second, we pro-
pose civic responsibility with reciprocal non-domination to advance
the “comfort women” case in the context of inherited responsibility.
Here, civic responsibility is presented as a proper ground for sharing
collective responsibility without disregarding historical responsibility
as individual choice. Moreover, because reciprocal non-domination
aims at reconciliation beyond compensation, it operates as a future-
centered regulative principle that encourages both victims and
wrongdoers to take a non-ethnocentric deliberative stance.

II. Inherited Responsibility: An Overview

Despite the importance of inherited responsibility, the “comfort
women” issue still is at an impasse. The first reason is that the agents
responsible for the misdeeds have not been properly defined. Two
limitations become apparent when we consider the state as an actor
involved in inherited responsibility. First, the concept of the state
does not fully clarify the continuation of responsibility from the past
to the present and into the future because there is no shared or contin-
ued identity between the state responsible for the historical injustices
and the current Japanese government. Second, the issue of responsi-
bility may be delegated to a limited number of political officials or
representatives, excluding public participation. The Japanese govern-

2. State responsibility is generally based on the concept of the state as an institu-
tional entity that can hold formal and legal affairs. The main reason for holding
the state responsible is that it has the ability to make decisions and take actions,
such as signing treaties, conducting diplomacy, and fulfilling promises (Erskine,
2001; Thompson, 2002; Levy, 2008; Pierik, 2008).
ment has actually adopted this position on the issue of state responsibility. For instance, Japan’s political leaders have reiterated that their duty had already been wholly fulfilled through the international treaties signed after the Pacific War, such as the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty and the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. However, this focus on the international treaties has limited the scope of the ordinary Japanese citizen in participating freely in deliberations on the “comfort women” issue. Since the Japanese government is considered the sole agent in charge of the “comfort women” issue and since it considers all reparations to have been fully made, Japanese citizens are expected to disregard this issue.

On the other hand, the theory of national responsibility, which considers the nation rather than the state to be the actor, may be more effective than the theory of state responsibility. First and foremost, since a nation continues to exist regardless of the passage of time, historical responsibility should not disappear over time. Moreover, under national responsibility, not only government officials but also ordinary citizens can be active agents in addressing historical injustices. However, as a nation is not a tangible reality but an “imagined community” that is short of legal and political substance, problems such as sharing responsibility among citizens and remedying injustices may arise in practice. Further, appealing to the nation may accentuate national shame or purity. Thus the recovery of this national pride may become more important than the compensation of victims. In South Korea, the “comfort women” issue has been depicted as a national shame, causing the victims to feel moral guilt, which, in

3. National responsibility is considered one of the most elaborate theories in inherited responsibility because a nation can assume responsibility regardless of the passage of time. In this case, the common national identity is viewed as a source of continuity (Tamir, 1993; Miller, 1995). Based on the continuity between past generations and subsequent ones, inherited responsibility is explained as accountability to share (Miller, 2007; Butt, 2008), active association with the past stemming from national pride (Abdel-Nour, 2003) and the affection of descendants for their ancestors (Wheeler, 1997).
effect, has paradoxically reinforced the violation of their human rights. Furthermore, the nationalists, who have emphasized the emotional condemnation of Japan, have measurably impeded a sincere or “thick” reconciliation.

The second reason why this issue cannot be dealt with by existing arguments on inherited responsibility is that the scope problem remains unresolved. Simply put, the scope problem indicates to what extent the wrongdoer ought to be responsible for historical injustices. As evident in Japan’s assertion that the problem of providing compensation for war crimes was resolved by the South Korean-Japanese Treaty in 1965, the Japanese government has tended to confine the scope of its responsibility to the legal and material sphere, without morally acknowledging its crime. As a result, the Japanese government fails to notice that the real demand of the former “comfort women” is the restoration of their dignity through a sincere admission from Japan of its wrongdoings. In contrast, South Korea has demanded from Japan an acknowledgement of historic injustices, an official apology, and the revision of controversial Japanese textbooks. Even if Japan were to consider not only its legal and material responsibilities but also the restoration of the dignity, honor, and human rights of the “comfort women,” the “politics of apologies” constantly stimulates Japan, and an apology becomes more difficult because the injustices in question were perpetrated a long time ago by a previous generation.

A. The Agent Problem: State or Nation

The Japanese government still insists that all reparations for Japanese atrocities had been made in accordance with the 1965 South Korean-Japanese Treaty and holds the view that the acts of assuming legal responsibility and providing state-to-state material compensation are sufficient for its reconciliation with South Korea. A statement made by Cabinet Minister Morihito Hosokawa during a plenary session of the upper house of the Japanese Diet clearly illustrates the consistent and unchanging view of the Japanese government. He stated that the problem of compensating the “comfort women” was com-
pletely and finally resolved in accordance with the 1965 Agreement Concerning the Settlement of Problems in Regard to Property and Claims and Economic Cooperation in the “Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea.” Thus, any additional action involving reparations would only be a humanitarian effort, not an obligation, motivated by compassion for the “comfort women” who underwent tremendous suffering. In principle, the Japanese government has tended to regard the state as the agent responsible for the “comfort women” issue. The Japanese government also regards the state as an officially composed political entity that carries out domestic and foreign policies regardless of the people living in its territory.

However, state responsibility is not an appropriate framework to use in solving the “comfort women” problem. There are two reasons for this. First, because of the absence of a shared and continued identity between the erstwhile empire of Japan and the current post-war government of Japan, state responsibility cannot guarantee that responsibility for historical injustices committed by the Japanese military through the end of World War II in 1945 will be transferred to the current generation (Miller, 2007: 112). Although the state of Japan has remained intact despite regime changes, the rationale of state responsibility is insufficient in persuading the state’s members to take responsibility for their predecessors’ wrongdoing. Worse still, state-centered responsibility engenders the notion that responsibility for historical injustices does not exist if the victims and/or perpetrators have since passed away. For instance, political leaders in Japan frequently state that demands for a sincere official apology to and compensation for the survivors of the “comfort women” system will dwindle as the survivors die of old age or illness (Lee Hahm, 2001: 128). However, it is inappropriate for the descendants, who enjoy the benefits the colonial rulers brought about, to disclaim any responsibility for the harm the colonial rulers brought to the victims, who still suffer from past injustices.

4. Morihito Hosokawa at the 128th plenary session of the upper house of the Japanese Diet (September 24, 1993).
The second limitation of state responsibility is that the agency that takes responsibility is likely to be restricted to a relatively small number of individuals, such as diplomats and other government officials. We do not question the appropriateness of these representatives’ role in inherited responsibility when public opinion is well formulated through a democratic deliberation process. We do, however, consider this appropriateness since Japan does not place sufficient emphasis on democratic deliberation and does not institute any deliberative process at all. As a result, the responsibility for historical injustices cannot be maintained in terms of self-determination. In other words, there is no sincere expression of respect when there is only a decision made by political officials without a public consensus. In addition, the insistence of the Japanese government that all reparations were made through earlier international treaties has prevented a broader and deeper discussion on the issue among Japanese citizens. If we cannot expect a change in the attitude of the Japanese government, it may be the ordinary Japanese citizens who could change the government. Yet those who fail to acknowledge their obligation to remedy their ancestors’ misdeeds cannot be expected to pressure their government to initiate feasible solutions and reconciliation.

The limitations of the theories of state responsibility can be com-

5. According to Caney, treating states as responsible agents is highly unfair to individuals who are disadvantaged because of the actions of a non-democratic state (Caney, 2003: 302). Nobles also points out that demands for an apology have the greatest chance of success in democratic countries where people have “open channels of participation.” As opposed to legal measures, apologies are publicized by providing room for deliberation, and they present collective, rather than individual, guilt (Nobles, 2008: 9-12; 29-30).

6. After all, the 1951 San Francisco Treaty between Japan and the Allied Powers and the 1965 South Korean-Japanese Treaty had certain inherent flaws with regard to legal reparation. The two Koreas were not parties to the San Francisco Treaty. Further, the “comfort women” issue was not dealt with in the South Korean-Japanese Treaty. Worse still, the compensation provided by Japan was not used for assisting individual victims but was appropriated by the South Korean government for its own economic development projects (Hicks, 1994: 170-171; Motooka Shoji in the 145th Budget Committee session of the House of Representatives on September 8, 1999; Shin, 2009: 24, 50).
plemented if the nation rather than the state is considered the proper bearer of the inherited responsibility. The continuity of a nation over time is a powerful rationale for why future generations are responsible for injustices perpetrated by past generations. As Miller emphasizes, with regard to nation, the common ground between old and new generations can encompass bequeathed territories, institutions, and physical and cultural capital (Miller, 2007: 151-159). The very existence of visible benefits gained through historical injustices constitutes a sufficient reason to oblige every individual in the nation to redress the losses of the victimized party. If it is acknowledged that the continuity of national commonality resides not only in material and substantial gains but in common identity and cultural ties, the “comfort women” case, in which the descendants of the perpetrators do not obtain any advantages but only the harm from the past, can be investigated more sophisticationly in terms of inherited responsibility.

The paucity of appropriate bearers of state responsibility can also be overcome through national responsibility. While officials or the political elites play a pivotal role in state-centered responsibility, citizens can also become active agents in assuming historical responsibility. Primarily because the members of a nation have a feeling of solidarity based on their common identity, perhaps one can expect a voluntary and active participation from them with regard to their duty to demand reparations or redress past injustices. The level of interest in the “comfort women” issue is much higher in South Korea than it is in Japan, which is in keeping with the idea of national responsibility. Not only government officials and militant activists but also ordinary citizens are aware of the “comfort women” issue. Moreover, many controversial aspects of Japanese-Korean relations, such as the territorial dispute regarding the Dok-do Islands and the history textbook debate, often stimulate a strong sense of solidarity among Koreans, occasionally eliciting intense emotional reactions. Thus, it is little wonder that South Korea rejects the logic of the Japanese government, which acknowledges only legal responsibility and state-to-state material compensation.

It is doubtful whether the “comfort women” issue will ever be
successfully resolved based on the principle of national responsibility. First, nations are, to use Benedict Anderson’s term, political entities concocted through imaginative experiences that are short of legal substance. It may thus be difficult to determine how the responsibility should be shared among people and how the harm caused should be remedied. Solidarity spurred by national commonality may provide us with a rationale for inherited responsibility, but historical responsibility is made feasible largely through actual politics rather than through imaginative ties. Nevertheless, Miller believes that since nationality functions as an impetus to creating a powerful civic trust between citizens, it can guarantee their collective responsibility for historical injustices done by previous generations (Miller, 1995: 72-73; 2000: 31-33; 2007: 135-161).

Second, appealing to the nation might give more priority to the restitution of national pride than to the restitution of the victims’ dignity. There is a tendency in Korean society to associate the “comfort women” discourse with national pride and national shame. Since the feminine gender has frequently been depicted in the “comfort women” discourse as the property of the nation, the demand for an apology has been interpreted as the process of restoring national pride and lost chastity. In this context, the victims, who have been always regarded as passive objects, have been humiliated (Yang, 1998: 163; 165-172). Indeed, the ugly face of nationalism is evident in the testimonies of former “comfort women.” They feel intense guilt and humiliation for having been “comfort women” (Ito, 1994: 115-122; Ministry of Gender Equality, 2002: 136, 181). Recently, the Korean Council sued a number of internet users who had persistently insulted these women. This discussion illustrates how the nationalist “comfort women” discourse has helplessly subjected the victims to immense humiliation as women and made them feel guilty.

In short, inherited responsibility based on either the state or the nation cannot be considered proper grounds for solving the “comfort women” issue. For this reason, we need a new paradigm, not only for this issue but also for achieving a thick reconciliation between Japan and South Korea.
B. The Scope Problem: Punishing or Forgetting

There have been two dominant positions on reparations for historical injustices. The first emphasizes that one party has to pay back whatever was lost or harmed without consideration for prospective provisions for restoring bilateral relations in the future. No matter how straightforward this may appear, such a simple view of restitution has practical weaknesses. On the one hand, in some cases, it is impossible to restore what was damaged. Examples of this include the absence of the expropriator, the victim, or the object taken (Vernon, 2003: 551; Kukathas, 2003: 170). All three of the above can be found in the case of the “comfort women.” In addition, no visible and material property can be restored or returned in this case because the women lost human dignity and human rights, not land or property. Thus, we need to define the problem of historical injustices by using a more sophisticated logic through which we may use a compensatory system even in the absence of perpetrators, victims, and objects taken.

On the other hand, unilateral retribution without restoring relations may not only result in a failed reconciliation between the involved parties but also end in deadlock (He, 2009: 25-45). In particular, if the parties hold diametrically opposing views and memories regarding the past wrongdoing, this method may reproduce and aggravate the conflict. This is exemplified in the case of the “comfort women.” Whenever deliberating about the issue, we can easily find that both Japan and South Korea remain steadfast in their ethnocentric positions. Specifically, Japan stresses that its wartime atrocities should not be singled out for worldwide criticism because these atrocities, including the operation of comfort stations, were inevitable during the war. This feeling of victimization intensifies whenever its neighboring countries criticize Japan or demand an official apology (Shin, 2009: 8-20). This indicates the need for a deliberative stance for forward-looking reconciliation in which both parties can overcome the feeling of victimization and exclusive nationalism.

The second approach to address reparations for historical injustices is focused on the establishment or reestablishment of current and
future bilateral relations without resolving the historical injustices themselves. This tactic of forgetting historical wrongdoing may actually be used as a method to deny all responsibility of historical wrongdoing (Kukathas, 2003: 172; Miller, 2007: 139). Denying historical responsibility would, of course, result in new conflicts between the two parties. For instance, in July 1995, the Japanese government decided to establish a foundation called the “Asian Women’s Fund” to support former “comfort women” (Han, 1995). Such an attitude, which focuses only on the restoration of bilateral relations in the future, actually aggravates anti-Japanese sentiment because neighboring countries do not regard the creation of a fund such as this to be a sincere attempt at reconciliation. As a result, the foundation was criticized by South Korea on the grounds that it was not a “public” fund but only a “private” one that granted “atonement money” to former “comfort women” (Schmidt, 2000: 68, 173).

Another problem inherent in the restoration of bilateral relations without taking past wrongdoing into consideration is the lack of an assurance that these inhumane atrocities can be prevented in the future. The supersession theory developed by Jeremy Waldron states that the resources of the world are supposed to be distributed in a way that is fair to all of its existing inhabitants. Emphasizing that any behavior counted as injustice may be considered just under new and different circumstances, this theory claims that it is more important to resolve present injustices than historical ones (Waldron, 1992: 13, 24-27). We can agree that the present in which we live is precious and that we still face a wide range of injustices, inequalities, and unfairness. However, a past injustice hardly, if ever, becomes just; the passage of time does not provides a change from injustice to justice but a period of time in which to demonstrate justice by helping those in need. Similarly, if we say, as did the “Asian Women’s Fund” that financial support is the most urgent need of the former “comfort women,” we patently fail to take a lesson from our past.

Shortly put, a new principle is needed to resolve the “comfort women” problem, through which non-ethnocentric deliberation may be realized; the victims’ position in society will be restored (although
nothing will truly replace what they have lost; responsibility for historical wrongdoing will not be neglected; and the repetition of similar injustices will be prevented.

III. Civic Responsibility with Reciprocal Non-domination

South Korean NGOs have played a pivotal role in drawing national and international attention to the “comfort women” issue (Jung, 2004: 108-130). At the citizens’ level, an increasing number of people in South Korea have been paying attention to and becoming involved in the “comfort women” issue through channels such as the Wednesday Demonstrations, donations, and volunteer activities. At the national level, as early as 1993, the South Korean National Assembly enacted a law to provide support to former “comfort women.” At the international level, the UN Commission on Human Rights published Radhika Coomaraswamy’s report on “Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences” in 1996, 1998, 2001, and 2003. The International Court of Justice published its final report in 1994 under the title of “Comfort Women: An Unfinished Ordeal,” while the International Labor Organization (ILO) asserted that the “comfort women” system violated international laws. The attention paid to the “comfort women” issue in international society is also evident in related parliamentary resolutions that have been passed in a number of countries, such as the U.S., the Netherlands, Canada, and the EU.

Some of these South Korean NGOs, however, have also experienced internal conflicts caused by ideological disagreements from groups that have adopted an ethnocentric position (Jung, 1994: 120-130, 254-258). To facilitate NGO’s efforts and to overcome the limitations of the existing solutions to the “comfort women” issue, we suggest “civic responsibility” with reciprocal non-domination.

A. Civic Responsibility as a Framework

According to liberals, a political agent is free of the guilt of the father, and responsibility can thus be imposed only by personal
choice or through consensus. For example, Abdel-Nour claims that only individually imagined national pride or shame through individual willingness to reflect on history can be an imperative standard by which to decide whether the next generation is responsible for their ancestors’ faults (Abdel-Nour, 2003: 701-703). This argument, however, is problematic because it attributes responsibility wholly to individual choice. In other words, according to this argument, the perpetrators or their children can choose their responsibility, whereas the victims or their descendants have no opportunity to escape from the sufferings and wounds caused by the historical injustices inflicted on them.

In contrast, there is a communitarian argument that inherited responsibility should be taken collectively because human beings are socially interdependent and are spiritually embedded in the common interests of a political community (Feinberg, 1970; Zimmerman, 1985; May, 1987; Crawford, 2007). This argument is also problematic in the sense that individuals are subordinated to collective goods or objects. In addition, it is doubtful whether mere membership can bring about a genuine desire to take responsibility for past injustices that are not directly related to the present generation.

Inherited responsibility requires a framework of civic responsibility, through which citizens may take responsibility collectively without suppressing their individual autonomy and dignity. At this juncture, civic responsibility is represented at three levels. Reciprocal recognition at the individual level, civic contestability at the state level, and civic decency at the international level (Kwak, 2008).

First, a responsible citizen must recognize another community member’s need even if they have conflicting interests. This anthropocentric recognition of the other is possible if the reciprocal understanding at the individual level is based not on self-interest or altruistic devotion but on self-love, which can be extended to humanitarian considerations. In this sense, apart from acceptance, indifference, and approval (which are mainly employed by approaches focusing on self-interest and individual choice), civic responsibility can be implemented in specific conditions that are rooted in reciprocal recognition.
To put it concretely, acceptance does not approve of differences, indifference does not approve of individual preferences, and approval does not approve of the will to coexist. However, tolerance in civic responsibility accommodates differences with a clear preference and necessitates a will to coexist despite differences. At the individual level of civic responsibility, taking responsibility for the “comfort women” issue is never reduced to individual choice. In addition, citizens of the victimized country may also try to prevent any violence against local women that may be similar to that which took place under the “comfort women” system.

Second, at the state level, we need to establish an institution that can maintain reciprocity at the individual level and guarantee civic contestability that will keep check on the institution. For this, the republican conception of liberty as non-domination can provide us with an institution aimed at preserving reciprocity among citizens, and each citizen should have the capacity to check and monitor the institution’s arbitrary use of political power. By the same token, civic responsibility based on liberty as non-domination can encourage citizens to check and monitor deliberation on the “comfort women” issue to prevent the violation of liberty as non-domination. As previously noted, the “comfort women” debate in South Korea frequently becomes a manifestation of extreme nationalism, which compounds the suffering of the former “comfort women.” If this debate had focused on the restoration of liberty as non-domination rather than on the healing of national pride, inherited responsibility would not have guided all of the movements and the discourse on the issue, which have been based mainly on virulent nationalism.

Third, civic decency is required in the application of civic respon-

---

7. The concept of liberty as non-domination has been developed by the so-called neo-Roman theorists, such as Quentin Skinner, Philip Pettit, Maurizio Viroli, and Jean-Fabian Spitz. Using Machiavelli’s notion of libertà, they articulate liberty as, for example, “I am free to the degree that no human being has the arbitrary power to interfere with me even if I lack the will or the wisdom required for achieving self-mastery.” See Pettit (1996: 578). For critical assessments to this line of thought, see Kwak (2004: 219-239).
sibility at the international level (Kwak, 2009b). Taking civic responsibility can be acknowledged by citizens as a way of dignifying themselves. This will only occur, however, if it is articulated through democratic deliberation as ethical responsibility. By the same token, accepting inherited responsibility can be understood by citizens to be an extension of civic decency to people beyond national boundaries. This can be done only if this responsibility is conceptualized by democratic deliberation as a way of consolidating democratic legitimacy. Actually, inherited responsibility itself is a subject of public deliberation, and so it is conceived neither as prima facie nor as a natural right that has been granted by a superhuman power. Therefore, civic decency as a representation of citizens in a healthy democracy is imperative for empowering citizens to juxtapose their compatriots’ civic responsibility with ethical responsibility for other peoples, particularly in terms of liberty as non-dominination. In this way, anyone who wishes to either identify himself or herself with the achievements of his or her fellow citizens or find his or her dignity through them would voluntarily take on the inherited responsibility for the misdeeds of previous generations.

With civic responsibility, the “comfort women” issue can easily be viewed as a question of inherited responsibility. This is because not only the political elite but also citizens would actively participate in the deliberation and reach a consensus on how to resolve the issue satisfactorily. Those who can imagine the possibly grave results if the “comfort women” issue is not be resolved properly would earnestly persuade others to prevent the reoccurrence of similar injustices. In this sense, it can be argued that civic responsibility is shaped not through membership but through inter-subjective interaction among citizens, and therefore responsible citizens who experience civic and political equity in a democratic country would willingly take responsibility for historical wrongdoing committed by other members of the same community.
B. Reciprocal Non-domination as a Regulative Principle

As previously noted, the core of civic responsibility is democratic deliberation among citizens. The emphasis on democratic deliberation in terms of historical responsibility is not new. For example, arguing in favor of a reconciliatory approach, Thompson emphasizes “discourse” through which different interpretations of historical injustice can be coordinated and, as a result, the victims and perpetrators can develop a satisfactory relationship (Thompson, 2002: 49, 52). However, there is one more point that we need to consider: how an effective discursive stance can be created and operated. We suggest “reciprocal non-domination” as a regulative principle that can guarantee equal power to both parties with the aim of facilitating discussions between them.8

We expect that reciprocal non-domination, as a regulative principle in democratic deliberation, would serve three roles (Kwak, 2009a). First, reciprocal non-domination functions as a condition under which to establish a discursive stance between countries in conflict over historical injustice. When a deliberative stance is guided, the focus is the conditions under which more open and democratic debate can be guaranteed. Reciprocal non-domination could function as coherent grounds that protect an individual from being subjected to the arbitrary will of others, legitimize legal and institutional interference and, at the same time, draw the limits of this interference. For instance, if a victim were forced to forgive a historical injustice due to pressure from the perpetrator, we could view the situation through the principle of reciprocal non-domination as a problem of inequality between the powerful and the weak.

Second, reciprocal non-domination not only creates a deliberative

---

8. Reciprocal non-domination is not the first principle from which the rest of justice is derived, but is rather a regulative principle that serves two different roles. First, it guides thinking in the ongoing process in which citizens as well as theorists consider the requirements of justice in the case of particular laws in specific contexts. Second, it shows the need for other principles to fill out the content of a democratic deliberation process. See Kwak (2005).
stance but also forces the participants to follow the outcome of the discussions. If we can simply reject decisions resulting from deliberation on the grounds that the involved parties will inevitably have dissimilar and contrary opinions, the deliberative stance itself becomes meaningless and useless. However, if the result of the deliberation can also be regulated by this principle, the participants can insist on reciprocal non-domination as a minimal condition as well as an investigation standard during the deliberation. For instance, if the Japanese government refuses to accept the result that it must acknowledge its historical injustices and apologize to the former “comfort women,” the other participants in the deliberation process will recognize that the Japanese decision violates reciprocal non-domination. In this sense, reciprocal non-domination, not as the first principle but as a regulative rule, can form, maintain, and modify a deliberative stance.

Finally, reciprocal non-domination should include the process of internalizing liberty as non-domination as a normative principle. The minimal standard to reach an agreement through deliberation is reciprocity, which entails the identification of one’s status with that of one’s counterpart. However, reciprocity cannot be achieved automatically; it is shaped through the daily experience of liberty as non-domination. In the “comfort women” issue, the internalization of liberty as non-domination can bring about the reciprocity between the victims and the perpetrators. If the Japanese government believed that its citizens could also become victims of similar injustices, it would be far easier for it to reach an agreement that would be satisfactory not only to the present victimized party but also to the Japanese people.

IV. Conclusion

Even if we acknowledge the crucial role of political leaders in actualizing historical reconciliation, it is more important to realize that civic responsibility can be used to persuade fellow citizens to participate actively in assuming inherited responsibility. In other words, responsible citizens of perpetrating countries should call upon their
governments to apologize to victims and compensate them; meanwhile, the citizens of victimized countries should not only consider the fate of the victims but also contemplate whether there have been similar injustices committed in their own land.

If it is civic responsibility that encourages citizens to participate voluntarily in a deliberation stance to resolve historical injustices, it is reciprocal non-domination that is conducive to regulate differences in opinion and power status between the victimized and perpetrating parties. Moreover, deliberation coordinated by reciprocal non-domination would become a future-oriented, conflict-regulating mechanism through which present conflicts could be resolved and citizens not directly related to these conflicts could join the deliberation process willingly to prevent history from repeating itself. Through an understanding of the other side’s point of view as well as the assumption that we could find ourselves in the position of either the victim or the wrongdoer, we can create a salutary covenant for the future. We believe that civic responsibility with reciprocal non-domination would mend not only the distorted relationship between victims and wrongdoers but also humanity itself.

References


Erskine, Toni, “Assigning Responsibilities to Institutional Moral


Ito, Takashi, *Huin Otgoreum Ibe Mulgo* [Holding White Coat String in the Mouth] (Seoul: Nunbit, 1994).


Kwak, Jun-Hyeok, “Simui Minjujuui wa Bijibeajeok Sanghoseong” [Deliberative


Shin, Gi-Wook, Soon-Won Park, and Daqing Yang (eds.), Rethinking


