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Sustainable Peace, Inclusive Prosperity



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# ‘사회 전쟁’의 시점에서 학살 사건을 재고하다

# Reconsidering Massacres from “Social Warfare” Perspective

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Thank you for inviting me to this forum. My name is Masuda Hajimu. I'm a historian at the National University of Singapore. I've been working on 20th century Asian history, as well as the histories of the Korean War and the Cold War. More recently, I've been working on reconsideration of the Cold War world and its history, by focusing on what I call “social warfare”: that is, ordinary people's everyday struggles on the ground.

Here, let me begin with Professor Park Tae-kyun's presentation, which I liked quite a lot. What I like most is his approach to re-examining the Jeju 4.3 incident. He approaches the incident by placing it in the framework of world history and juxtaposing it with massacres in Vietnam and Indonesia, instead of viewing it simply as an event in Korean history.

In the beginning of his presentation, he pointed out that the nature of the Jeju incident, as well as its scale, has not been fully clarified even after a series of investigations in the past two decades. And, then, in order to deepen our thinking, he introduces massacres in Vietnam and Indonesia: namely, those conducted by U.S. and Korean forces during the Vietnam War, as well as the Indonesian Mass Killings of 1965 to 1966.

In both cases, he highlights the roles played by the state in mobilizing people and setting the stage for these massacres, as well as carrying out and concealing them afterwards. Thus, in conclusion, he argues for the need to acknowledge the responsibility of the state, demanding truth and compensation. And, at the end, a little bit abruptly, he also referred to the need for further academic research on another important aspect: that is, social struggles and historical conflicts concerning the Jeju incident.

As a discussant, I would like to develop his argument in two ways: one, by broadening the scope of comparison and, the other, by considering the last point—an aspect of social conflict—even more seriously. Let me go through these, one by one. First, while Professor Park compares the Jeju incident with massacres in Vietnam and Indonesia, I would suggest broadening the scope of comparison, incorporating cases of social suppression, such as McCarthyism in the U.S., the Red Purge in Japan, the White Terror in Taiwan, and the suppression of the Huk Rebellion in the Philippines, in addition to the Indonesian Mass Killings of 1965-66.

Some people might be surprised that I call these events “social suppression” because they’ve usually been considered typical cases of “political suppression,”

and, more specifically, anti-communist suppression at the height of the Cold War. In our commonsensical view, they were nothing but Cold War suppression.

And yet, if we examine each case more closely, with particularly attention to the aspect of social struggles and historical conflicts, they look quite different.

For instance, McCarthyism has usually been considered a case of anti-communist politics, but, if we look at the victims more carefully, we notice that they were not necessarily communists or communist sympathizers. Rather, they tended to be African Americans, civil rights activists, labor activists, feminist activists, gays and lesbians, and advocates of New Deal programs such as public housing and universal health care.

What these diverse groups of people represented was not communist ideology at all, but elements of social change that emerged from experiences of the Great Depression and World War II. In other words, if we take a social viewpoint, we can see McCarthyism as nativist backlash—a sort of social conservative phenomenon—that operated to contain and silence disagreements in the chaotic post-WWII era.

Here I don't have enough time to discuss other cases in Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, and other parts of the world, but, in my books, published in English and Japanese, I've examined each case and described them as part of a global phenomenon of "social warfare," in which ordinary people, (who today would be called "grassroots conservatives,") silenced various disagreements and elements of social change in order to maintain "order" and "harmony" in society.

The case of the Indonesian Mass Killings of 1965 to 66 was not included in my books. But, in my new project, "Reconceptualizing the Cold War: On-the-ground Experiences in Asia," I have been working with several Indonesian scholars to re-

examine the Indonesian massacre from a social viewpoint. In this case, too, the state—particularly the army—undoubtedly played important roles, but our research at the same time sheds light on various social and local conflicts, including not only political and economic disputes, but gender, religious, ethnic, and personal struggles within villages and communities.<sup>1)</sup>

In short, by broadening the scope of comparison, we can see that the Jeju incident might have more commonality than differences with other social suppressions, and this awareness, I think, will force us to rethink more seriously about Professor Park's last point: namely, the need to look into the aspect of social struggles and historical conflicts concerning the Jeju incident.

With this point in mind, I'm eager to know what were actually being fought over among people in the name of the Cold War. I would inquire the following questions: Did postwar Korea's various conflicts really come from ideological differences? Were mass killings conducted only between the state and islanders? Weren't there any social, cultural, or local conflicts on the island?

In other words, what kinds of social, cultural, local, gender, or generational conflicts existed underneath the Cold War confrontation? Even if ideology mattered, what kinds of individual emotions were carried through in the form of ideology, whether communism or anticommunism? What kinds of people were more interested in leftist thought, and what kinds of reactions arose before the incident?



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In short, I'm curious about what was going on on the ground and among people, before, during, and after the uprising and suppression.

I'm saying this because, like many other societies at that time, Korea went through drastic social changes in the post-WWII period. This was particularly the case for Jeju Island because, following the end of Japanese colonialism, tens of thousands of Jeju islanders were returning from Japan. As a matter of fact, many islanders went to Japan during the colonial period, and, in Osaka, which is my hometown by the way, Jeju islanders made up the majority of the Korean population.

Considering the history of Koreans' labor movement in Osaka, and considering Korean women's active participation in it, it's not surprising that they might have brought back new customs and cultures, new mode of activism, and new notions of gender relationships to the island. And it's not surprising that all of these became seeds of social change, as well as those of social tensions on the island, at a degree, more intense than the rest of the Korean peninsula.

In this way, by broadening the scope of comparison and by focusing on the aspect of social conflict, I think we can not only place the Jeju incident within a broader framework of 20th century global history, but also develop alternative views concerning the nature of the incident. In fact, I'm very much interested in exploring this topic further, and I would be very happy if I will have a chance to work with any researchers on Jeju Island or in South Korea in the future.

Thanks very much for listening.