

Report

(Abridged)

The Asahi Shimbun Co. Third-Party Committee

December 22, 2014

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1. Background to the Preparation of this Report and Matters for Investigation

(1) Background to the preparation of this report

This Committee was established by Tadakazu Kimura, president of The Asahi Shimbun Co., and charged by him with the task of investigating and making recommendations regarding coverage of the comfort women issue and other matters by The Asahi Shimbun.

(2) Matters for investigation

A) Establishing the facts

- The circumstances under which The Asahi Shimbun produced a total of 16 articles between 1982 and 1997 citing the testimony of Seiji Yoshida that during the Pacific War he had, on Jeju Island (in present South Korea), and acting as the head of the mobilization section at the Shimonoseki Branch of the Yamaguchi Prefectural Romu Hokokukai labor organization, forcibly taken away numerous Korean women for the purpose of compelling them to serve as so-called “comfort women” (hereafter, “the Yoshida testimony”).
- The circumstances behind the failure of The Asahi Shimbun to retract these articles citing the Yoshida testimony until the publication of the newspaper’s special coverage, *Ianfu mondai wo kangaeru* (Thinking about the comfort women issue), carried in the August 5, 2014 and August 6, 2014 morning editions of the newspaper.
- The circumstances behind the production of other major Asahi Shimbun articles on the comfort women issue not involving the Yoshida testimony.
- The circumstances behind The Asahi Shimbun seeking changes in and temporarily refusing to publish a column by Akira Ikegami scheduled to run in the August 29, 2014 edition.
- The impact that The Asahi Shimbun’s coverage of the comfort women issue has had on Japan-South Korea relations and other international relations.

B) Assessment of the above.

C) The attitude of The Asahi Shimbun toward covering the news, and other systemic issues manifest in both the coverage under consideration and other news coverage by the newspaper.

D) The way of reporting these subjects.

(3) The scope of the investigation

This Committee's investigation was carried out for the purpose of clarifying whether the reporting and coverage by The Asahi Shimbun on the comfort women issue, the negligence in not retracting earlier reporting, and the manner in which the newspaper handled the correction or retraction of past coverage was appropriate and permissible within the parameters of the freedom of the press. The confirmation of the facts regarding these matters was carried out to the extent necessary to make the above judgments.

(4) How the investigation was performed

In order to investigate the facts of these matters, between October 10, 2014 and December 12, 2014 this Committee held hearings and made other inquiries with President Kimura and more than 50 executives and employees of The Asahi Shimbun, as well as with experts and other individuals involved.

(5) The Asahi Shimbun organization

[Abridged]

2. Summary of Events

(1) The Yoshida testimony

The Asahi Shimbun devoted considerable space to articles related to the Yoshida testimony. Beginning with an article published in the newspaper's September 2, 1982 edition, The Asahi Shimbun published additional articles related to the Yoshida testimony on October 19, 1983; November 10, 1983; December 24, 1983; July 9, 1986; June 19, 1990; May 22, 1991; October 10, 1991; January 23, 1992; March 3, 1992; May 24, 1992; August 13, 1992; and January 25, 1994.

In the April 30, 1992 edition of the Sankei Shimbun newspaper and in the May 1, 1992 edition of Seiron magazine, the historian Ikuhiko Hata pointed out that, based upon both his own interviews with Yoshida and on-the-ground investigations on Jeju Island, there were questionable aspects to the Yoshida testimony. Even following Hata's critique, however, The Asahi Shimbun continued to carry articles citing the testimony.

In special coverage *on the comfort women issue* carried in its March 31, 1997 morning edition, The Asahi Shimbun noted that "no confirmation has been made about the authenticity" of the Yoshida testimony. Regardless, the newspaper did not correct or retract any of its articles citing the testimony until the 2014 special coverage.

(2) Major Asahi Shimbun articles on comfort women not involving the Yoshida testimony

In this report, the Committee has examined several other articles on the comfort women issue carried by The Asahi Shimbun in addition to those articles citing the Yoshida testimony. We have primarily reviewed the four articles published on August 11, 1991; December 25, 1991; January 11, 1992; and March 31, 1997.

(3) Special coverage

In addition, The Asahi Shimbun ran special coverage on the comfort women issue in its August 5, 2014 and August 6, 2014 morning editions.

(4) The Ikegami column

In 2014, The Asahi Shimbun was running a monthly column by Akira Ikegami titled *Shimbun naname-yomi* (Skimming the newspapers). The subject matter of the Ikegami column scheduled for publication in August 2014 was the newspaper's 2014 special coverage on the comfort women issue. After confirming the content of Ikegami's scheduled column, The Asahi Shimbun asked Ikegami to amend it on August 28, 2014. When Ikegami refused to make the requested changes, the newspaper did not run the column on the scheduled publishing day.

(5) Developments in the comfort women issue

[Abridged]

3. Overview of Coverage in Japan and Overseas

(1) Books and other publications

On June 27, 1970, Kakou Senda published an article titled *Tokubetsu repoto : Nippon rikugun ianfu* (Special Report: Imperial Japanese Army Comfort Women) in *Shukan Shincho* magazine, and subsequently published the books “*Koe-naki onna*” *Hachi-man-nin no kokuhatsu: Jugun ianfu* (“Women without voices” – The accusations of 80,000: Military comfort women) in 1973 and *Jugun ianfu, Seihen* (Military comfort women <Principal edition>) in 1978. The first of these two books was translated into Korean and published in South Korea the following year.

Yoshida published the book *Chosenjin ianfu to Nihonjin* (Korean comfort women and the Japanese) in 1977 and *Watakushi no senso hanzai* (My war crimes) in 1983. *Chosenjin ianfu to Nihonjin* was translated into Korean and published in South Korea in the early 1980s.

(2) Coverage in Japan’s domestic media

Following the publication of Hata’s research results in the April 30, 1992 edition of *Sankei Shimbun*, there was an increase in coverage and articles questioning the Yoshida testimony.

(3) Trends in coverage in international media

A) Coverage in South Korean media

In late June 1983, South Korean newspapers reported on the building of Yoshida’s “Monument of Apology.” However, there were only scattered articles published about the Yoshida testimony itself. According to Hata’s on-site research on Jeju Island, the *Jeju Ilbo* newspaper published an article in its August 14, 1989 edition reporting that residents of Jeju Island had refuted the Yoshida testimony. Ehwa Womans University professor Yun Chung-ok then published a four-part series titled *A Report of Coverage of Footprints of Grudge of the Volunteer Corps* in *The Hankyoreh* newspaper in January 1990. When Ms. Kim Hak-sun came forward and identified herself as a former comfort woman on August 14, 1991, the South Korean media reported the story en masse.

B) Coverage outside South Korea in the western media

[Abridged]

4. Asahi Shimbun Coverage of the Yoshida Testimony: the 1980s

(1) September 2, 1982 article

The first published article about the Yoshida testimony introduced the contents of a speech by Yoshida at a gathering held in the city of Osaka the previous day, September 1. This article was previously thought to have been written by Haruhito Kiyota. However, the Committee has determined that Kiyota was in South Korea for language studies at the time of publication, and could not have been the writer. The Committee has done its utmost to ascertain who the actual writer of the article was, but has been unable to do so. Therefore, we have been able to determine neither the writer's intent nor whether there was any corroborative research on the contents of the speech.

(2) October 19, November 10, and December 24, 1983 articles

These three articles were written not by the Seoul Bureau, but at the request of the Osaka City News Section, by Kiyota, then chief of the Kishiwada Bureau, which was under the jurisdiction of the Osaka City News Section. They were envisioned as part of a project to give an overview of the forcible taking away of Korean people during the war. Kiyota visited Yoshida at his home, and interviewed him for several hours. He asked Yoshida if he had supporting documents, but was told that they had all been burned. He was therefore unable to corroborate the testimony. Kiyota also did not perform adequate corroborative research on Yoshida's career and other details. He wrote these three articles based on his judgment that Yoshida's testimony was true given its very vivid and specific detail.

(3) Subsequent coverage of the Yoshida testimony

The July 9, 1986 article on the Yoshida testimony introduces Yoshida as a participant in a memorial gathering for Asian victims of the war. It was not based on any original reporting on his experiences.

5. Asahi Shimbun Coverage of the Yoshida Testimony: 1990 to February 1997

(1) 1990 coverage

The June 19, 1990 article introduced the information that Yoshida had burned his documents. Judging from the fact that Yoshida's statements are in quotation marks, we can conclude that the article was based on a direct interview with Yoshida. However, the writer of the article is unknown, and further details about the reporting cannot be determined.

At the time the Osaka City News Section was preparing a series of articles on the theme of peace, and looked into the possibility of locating former comfort women and writing an article about them. Takashi Uemura of the Osaka City News Section spent approximately two weeks in July conducting research in South Korea, but was unable to find any women who had formerly been comfort women.

(2) 1991 coverage

A) Articles concerning the Yoshida testimony

The reporter who wrote the May 22, 1991 article would probably have met with Yoshida before writing it. However, he says he has no memory of the events leading up to his reporting or of carrying out any corroborative background research. He further says that he does not believe that he himself attended the gathering that was the basis of the speech quoted in the article. While this article was written by an Asahi Shimbun reporter, it relies heavily on quotations from published materials and for this reason was not included in the list of retracted articles announced in the October 10, 2014 edition.

The same reporter was also the writer of the October 10, 1991 article. The article notes that the reporter interviewed Yoshida for more than three hours, but the reporter says that he no longer has clear memories of that interview.

B) Articles on the comfort women issue not related to the Yoshida testimony

a. August 11, 1991 article on self-identified comfort woman

This is a byline article by Uemura, then assigned to the Osaka City News Section, based on a tape recording he had obtained. The recording was made by The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan and was an interview with a "Korean military comfort woman" who had been taken to the front in the name of the Women's Volunteer Corps and forced to work as a prostitute for Japanese military personnel. The article introduces the contents of the tape, and includes such passages as: "According to the woman's account, she was born in northeastern China, and at the age of 17 was tricked into becoming a comfort woman." As the name of the woman was not revealed to Uemura in the course of his reporting, she remains anonymous in this article. However, an article based on an exclusive interview with the woman that appeared four days later in the August 15, 1991 edition of the Hokkaido Shimbun newspaper gave the woman's name as Kim Hak-sun.

b. December 25, 1991 article on self-identified comfort woman

This is another byline article by Uemura. On December 6, 1991, a group of former comfort women, including Ms. Kim, former Korean soldiers and civilian personnel for the military, and their bereaved family members, filed a lawsuit against the Japanese government seeking war compensation. The article reports that Uemura accompanied lawyers who were taking oral depositions in preparation for the case and heard Ms. Kim's testimony. It reproduces content from a tape recording that he made himself when accompanying the lawyers, and identifies it as being what he heard from Ms. Kim.

Prior to writing this article, Uemura would have known that Ms. Kim had attended a *kisaeng* school (for training female entertainers), as it was so noted in the lawsuit. However, he says that he did not mention this in that article because he did not consider it to be important.

(3) 1992 coverage

A) Articles concerning the Yoshida testimony

The May 24, 1992 article was written by Hayami Ichikawa who was then a reporter with the Tokyo City News Section. According to Ichikawa, immediately after the publication of Hata's research findings casting doubt on Yoshida's testimony he consulted with the desk editors and visited Yoshida at his home to confirm the veracity of his testimony. He asked Yoshida for documents or other corroborative material, but says he was shown no documentation of any kind.

Based on his research, Ichikawa concluded that, at the very least, the Yoshida testimony could not be used as "oral history." He says that after further consultation with the desk editors, he decided to write up the article to at least record the facts of the interview and put them on the record. He says that he had a strong impression that there was something suspicious about Yoshida, and he was careful to use phrases like "according to Yoshida" when writing the piece to avoid giving the impression that Yoshida's testimony was factual.

The August 13, 1992 article reporting on Yoshida's visit to South Korea just briefly notes the facts of the visit. The writer says that as suspicions had now been raised about the Yoshida testimony, he decided to only briefly report the facts of the visit itself.

The earlier January 23, 1992 article dealing with the comfort women issue appears to be based on a direct interview with Yoshida. However, the writer is now deceased, and the circumstances of the interview and how much additional background research was conducted remain unclear.

The March 3, 1992 column by the same writer addresses the uproar in response to his previous piece, and does not directly discuss the Yoshida testimony itself. Two additional opinion pieces written by outside experts were not based on original reporting on the Yoshida testimony.

B) Articles on the comfort women issue not related to the Yoshida testimony

a. January 11, 1992 article

The January 11, 1992 article is based on communications, staff diaries and other records found among documents in the Defense Agency (presently the Ministry of Defense) library by Chuo University professor Yoshiaki Yoshimi. In addition to the main article, the newspaper ran a keyword explanation about the phrase “*jugun ianfu*” (military comfort women) under the headline *Ooku wa chosenjin josei* (Many were Korean women). This article includes the line: “With the outbreak of the Pacific War, mainly Korean women were forcibly taken away in the name of the Volunteer Corps. The numbers are said to be between 80,000 and 200,000.”

That day’s evening edition carried an additional article reading: “On the 11th a document titled ‘*Kuri kanri yoko soan*’ (Proposed guidelines for the supervision of coolies) issued by the War Preparedness Section of the Development Bureau of the Army Ministry was found in the Historical Museum of Hokkaido in Sapporo. The document directed business operators to attract Korean and Chinese comfort women ‘in consideration of the sexual needs’ of Chinese forcibly brought (to Hokkaido).”

Yoshimi says that he contacted Tetsuro Tatsuno, at the time a reporter with the Tokyo City News Section, regarding the existence of these materials at the end of 1991. Tatsuno himself says he received the communication from Yoshimi at the end of 1991 and, after investigating past testimony delivered before the Diet, judged that the new information was indeed newsworthy. However, as the Defense Agency library was closed for the year-end holidays when he attempted to independently confirm the existence of the documents, it was not until after the New Year that he actually visited the library in the company of Yoshimi. After Tatsuno confirmed the existence of the documents and photographed them, The Asahi Shimbun made the decision to run a story.

According to Tatsuno, the timing of Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa’s visit to South Korea was not on his mind while preparing the article. Further, while Tatsuno played a central part in writing the front-page piece that ran in the January 11, 1992 morning edition, he says that he did not write the accompanying keyword explanation of the term “military comfort women.” He further states that rewrites were made to his introduction to the article by his superiors, including the desk editor, and that in that process the final article came to reflect Prime Minister Miyazawa’s South Korea visit.

The keyword explanation is believed to have been prepared under the direction of Norio Suzuki, the desk editor at the time, and appears to have been written based on information such as past articles in The Asahi Shimbun’s files. Further, Ichikawa says that he, too, was called in to assist on the article some two days before publication, but that his work was limited to preparing part of comments by experts and checking background material. He also wrote an article that ran in the evening edition based on interviews with government sources, and an article about the hotline called “Comfort Women 110.” He says that he himself was not involved in the article concerning the Hokkaido documents.

b. Coverage of the April 1992 announcement of Hata's research results

On April 30, 1992, Sankei Shimbun ran an article on its city news page pointing out problems with the Yoshida testimony based on the results of Hata's research and other sources. The article concluded with a quote from Hata stating: "While this is not a complete refutation of Yoshida's 'comfort women hunts,' we can say that, with regard to the 'comfort women hunts' on Jeju Island that occupy such a significant percentage of his book, their credibility is extremely doubtful."

(4) 1993 to 1997 Coverage (Up to the March 31, 1997 special coverage)

From 1992 on, there was a growing consensus even within The Asahi Shimbun itself that the Yoshida testimony was unreliable, and articles citing his testimony all but disappeared. With the exception of one reader's contribution to the newspaper's "Voice" section, the only article to mention the Yoshida testimony during this time ran on January 25, 1994.

This article was included in a special section marking the 115th anniversary of the publication of The Asahi Shimbun, and was one section of a larger article titled *Seiji ugokashita chosa hodo* (Investigative reporting that changed politics). It looked back on investigative journalism not only about the comfort women issue, but also about the earlier war reparations issue. There was no byline, and details of the circumstances leading to its publication, how it was researched, and how the contents were decided upon all remain unclear.

(5) Evaluation

A) Appropriateness of the content of articles concerning the Yoshida testimony and the response to criticism of these articles

It is undeniable that Yoshida did make statements containing the reported content in speeches and in other settings at the time, and The Asahi Shimbun cannot be faulted for reporting that Yoshida made such testimony or for reporting the contents of that testimony.

Nonetheless, it goes without saying that when statements are made regarding certain facts, a news organization with the responsibility for accurate reporting should confirm the veracity of purported facts contained within such statements before reporting them. From that perspective, it is only natural that this Committee should examine the question of whether or not corroboratory investigations appropriate under the prevailing conditions of the time were carried out each step of the way.

When we review the research on which each of these articles about the Yoshida testimony was based, we find that it comprised simply writing down Yoshida's statements, and that no further attempts were made to confirm the facts based on objective documentation.

Taking into account that Yoshida's testimony concerned actions taken in wartime Korea and that by the time these stories were reported more than 35 years had passed,

and further, that they concerned subject matter that would be by no means easy to confirm, it could be said that, to some extent, there may have been no choice but to judge their credibility based solely upon Yoshida's words and conduct itself. This is true so far as concerns the articles from the 1980s, where we still have some latitude to view them as simple reports on Yoshida's words and conduct.

If, however, there was already a preconception in place at The Asahi Shimbun that the kind of events to which Yoshida testified could have happened, and if that preconception contributed in turn to the newspaper neglecting to carry out sufficient corroborative research to confirm the events, then in light of the import of the subject matter concerned, this represents a serious problem.

Further, there was not the same urgency to get articles about the Yoshida testimony into print as there is for articles on crimes, accidents, or similar incidents, but articles about the testimony were published repeatedly and given considerable space on the pages of The Asahi Shimbun without any confirmatory research having been carried out, while multiple reporters were involved in writing them. If these facts are all taken into consideration, then the continued failure of the newspaper to properly confirm the accuracy of the testimony looms larger and larger the later the article came out.

In particular, the articles that ran in the May 22, 1991 and October 10, 1991 editions were published much later, at a time when the comfort women issue had already emerged as a social issue. Yet even then, the Committee could ascertain no evidence that any adequate attempts were made to confirm the accuracy of the testimony beyond re-interviewing Yoshida himself.

Hata's research results conflicted head-on with the Yoshida testimony. That being the case, Hata's research needed to be addressed in the pages of The Asahi Shimbun when it reported on the testimony subsequently, be that via a more thorough investigation into the accuracy of the testimony itself, or via an acknowledgment that criticism of the testimony existed. Ichikawa already harbored doubts about the veracity of the testimony, and that same awareness appears to have been shared to some degree by the various relevant departments of the newspaper.

Yet if that was indeed the case, then The Asahi Shimbun should have been far more cautious when taking up the Yoshida testimony going forward, and the question of what to do about its previously published articles on the testimony should have become an important issue within the newspaper.

Instead, however, The Asahi Shimbun took only stopgap measures like putting the testimony in quotation marks. Still without having taken any steps such as sending someone to Jeju Island to conduct corroborative research, from beginning to end the newspaper's response was limited to the passive measure of reducing the number of articles it ran about Yoshida. This was a betrayal of the trust of the readers, and that manner of journalism should be criticized.

B) Articles about self-identified comfort women

Questions have been raised about the August 11, 1991 article about the self-identified comfort woman, including charges that Uemura, the lead reporter on the story, used

personal family connections to obtain privileged access to the information.

This Committee finds no evidence of this. Regarding the reporting process, Uemura says that he received an introduction to The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan from The Asahi Shimbun's Seoul Bureau chief, thereby gaining access to the Council's tape recording. The Seoul Bureau chief also says he had information from Yun Chung-Ok at the Council, and that he passed that information on to Uemura, feeling it was appropriate for Uemura to cover the story as he had already conducted research in South Korea the previous year when he was searching for former comfort women.

We find nothing unusual about these statements, given that it was normal for the Seoul Bureau and the Osaka City News Section (particularly Osaka City News Section staff with experience studying in South Korea) to be in contact with one another, and given Uemura's own track record of reporting in South Korea. Considering further that, immediately after Uemura wrote his own article in which he said that the former comfort woman remained anonymous, the Hokkaido Shimbun published an article based on an exclusive interview with the woman in question that used her real name, it is difficult to see that Uemura was in any particularly advantageous position when he wrote the article in question.

While Uemura clearly understood from listening to the tape that the woman in his article represented an example of a woman who had been "deceived" into becoming a comfort woman, in the preface to his article he wrote:

"We have learned that one of the 'Korean military comfort women' who were taken to the front in the name of the 'Women's Volunteer Corps' and forced to serve as prostitutes for Japanese military personnel is now living in Seoul."

This gave the impression—due to the images generally associated with the terms "Women's Volunteer Corps" and "taking away"—that the woman in question had been forcibly taken away, even though she had not in fact been taken away by force in the name of the Women's Volunteer Corps. This was a facile and imprudent description that invited misunderstanding among the readers.

Turning next to the December 25, 1991 article in The Asahi Shimbun, an article on Kim in the August 15, 1991 edition of The Hankyoreh newspaper had already reported that she was a graduate of a kisaeng school and that she had been taken to China by her foster father. In addition, the December 25 article came out after the lawsuit against the Japanese government by former comfort women had been filed, and it was noted in the brief for that lawsuit that Kim had attended a kisaeng school. Uemura would therefore also have had this information at the time he was preparing his article.

We cannot conclude that just because Kim had attended a kisaeng school she became a comfort woman voluntarily, nor that it could not be helped that she was tricked into becoming a comfort woman. Yet, by reporting on the circumstances leading to her becoming a comfort woman while omitting mention of the kisaeng school, there is a possibility that the Uemura article failed to accurately convey a full picture of the events. Together with reporting the confirmed facts of her story, the article should

have gone on to explain what a kisaeng school is or to describe what the lives of women attending these schools were like, and left it to the readers' judgment to decide.

C) Articles on military involvement

Regarding The Asahi Shimbun's January 11, 1992 article on military involvement in comfort stations, the Committee can find nothing wrong with the decision to run at the top of the newspaper's front page a news article about documents containing content that contradicted testimony given before the Diet.

As regards the timing of that publication and the charge that The Asahi Shimbun chose not to write the article immediately upon obtaining the new information but chose instead to hold it to run on the eve of the prime minister's visit to South Korea with the deliberate intention of creating a political issue, we do find some aspects of the lead reporter's testimony about the process of preparing the article unusual. However, it has proven impossible to confirm if this was or was not the case.

However, it is also true that the preface to the article contains the line, "In addition to the government being pressed to come up with a new response, Prime Minister Miyazawa has been burdened with another serious issue for his visit to South Korea on the 16th," and that an article on the city news page further notes: "(This) is also likely to have an impact on the outcome of the lawsuit by former Korean comfort women seeking reparations from the Japanese government."

From this it is clear that, regardless of whether or not The Asahi Shimbun coordinated the actual timing of publication, the newspaper was fully cognizant of the timing of the prime minister's visit to South Korea and did intend to make the comfort women issue a political issue.

This article has also been criticized for helping to plant the image in the public mind in both South Korea and Japan that the Japanese military could very well have been involved in the forcible taking away of comfort women. However, as the article itself contains no factual errors, and there is nothing in it about the forcible taking away of comfort women, it is inappropriate to assert that The Asahi Shimbun used this article to in effect report that the military was involved in the forcible taking away of comfort women.

It must be added, the inaccuracy of the accompanying keyword explanation of the term "military comfort women" did invite the misunderstanding of readers. Even accounting for the fact that the distinction between comfort women and the Volunteer Corps had yet to be clearly delineated at the time, the keyword explanation lacked precision in the way it was compiled.

6. The 1997 Special Coverage

(1) Content of the special coverage pages

In its special coverage in the March 31, 1997 edition, The Asahi Shimbun addressed the comfort women issue in detail under the two headlines: *Jugun ianfu: Kakusenai jijitsu* (Military comfort women – The facts that cannot be erased) and *Seifu ya gun no fukai kanyo, meihaku* (The government and military’s deep involvement is clear).

Regarding the Yoshida testimony, the special coverage simply noted in its opening text:

“(The testimony) appeared in The Asahi Shimbun and other media, but in short order voices were raised questioning it. No testimony corroborating (Yoshida’s) writings has come forward from among the people of Jeju Island, and no confirmation has been made about the authenticity.”

The special coverage neither corrected nor retracted the newspaper’s past coverage of the Yoshida testimony. Its core was the section on “coerciveness,” and in defining “coercion” the special coverage criticized arguments that sought to limit the issue of coercion to a narrowly defined “forcible taking away” of women by the military and the authorities. Instead it argued that coercion could also be said to have occurred in cases where women were recruited deceptively, or were physically or psychologically forced to remain in the comfort stations.

The editorial that ran in the newspaper that same day was titled *Rekishu kara me wo sorasumai* (We cannot turn our eyes away from history), and argues that “the tendency to address this problem from the narrow perspective of whether the Japanese military directly took women away by force or not” is to “miss the essence of the problem,” and concludes that “it is clear that conditions that should be defined as ‘coercive’ existed in the processes of recruitment, transfer and supervision of comfort women as a whole.”

(2) How the special coverage was compiled

The main motivation for the 1997 special coverage was the movement against plans to include references to comfort women in the new junior high school history textbooks to be used from the 1997 school year starting in April (the so-called “history textbook issue”). As debate over the history textbook issue flared, it also reignited the debate over the credibility of the Yoshida testimony and a range of articles that had appeared in The Asahi Shimbun about the Yoshida testimony came in for criticism, including but not limited to the two *Mado* (Window) columns written by a member of the editorial section that ran in the newspaper’s January 23 and March 3, 1992 editions.

Given these circumstances, it was decided within the Editorial Division in or around December 1996 to publish special coverage on the comfort women issue.

(3) Composition and duties of the 1997 special coverage team

A joint three-department special coverage team was assembled from among the Political News Section, the City News Section and the Foreign News Section. The Editorial Board was also involved on occasion. Deputy Managing Editor Kotaro Akiyama and the editors of each department set the overall direction, monitored the state of progress, and considered appropriate timings for the inclusion of articles. The section editors and reporters met a total of five to six times in biweekly meetings. The Chuo University professor Yoshiaki Yoshimi was invited to attend an early meeting, and gave a lecture on the comfort women and the textbook issue to the editors and reporters present.

The City News Section was responsible for pulling together and organizing material and data on the comfort women issue, writing up the statements of former comfort women from different countries, and preparing content on the textbook issue. The Political News Section was responsible for an interview with Yohei Kono, in whose name the 1993 statement was issued offering an apology to comfort women when he was the Chief Cabinet Secretary during the Kiichi Miyazawa administration, while the Foreign News Section was assigned to undertake corroborative research on Jeju Island.

The Foreign News Section editor in charge directed Uemura, then a foreign correspondent at the Seoul Bureau, to investigate the credibility of the Yoshida testimony. Uemura traveled to Jeju Island to look for witnesses who could corroborate the testimony. The investigation was carried out in haste and could not be considered thorough. Afterwards, Uemura sent a memo to the Asahi Tokyo Head Office reporting that he had not been able to obtain any testimony substantiating the Yoshida testimony.

In early March one of the head reporters for the special coverage team attempted to contact Yoshida directly, but Yoshida refused to answer questions regarding his testimony over the telephone. The reporter subsequently visited Yoshida's home but Yoshida was out. In the end, he was unable to speak with Yoshida directly about his testimony.

On March 19 there was a final meeting to ensure that everyone in the special coverage team was on the same page, and there was a discussion among the desk editors and reportorial staff. On March 26, following a check by Yoshimi, the article was completed.

(4) The handling of the Yoshida testimony

At hearings of this Committee, witness opinion was split regarding the Yoshida testimony's credibility problem and how past articles based on the testimony were to be handled in the 1997 special coverage. Some witnesses asserted that the accuracy of the Yoshida testimony was only a collateral aspect of the textbook issue, some maintained that it was a major unresolved problem on a par with the textbook issue itself, and others said that the entire special coverage was at heart an attempt to put the Yoshida testimony to rest.

On the question of whether the Yoshida testimony and past articles required

correction, retraction, or an apology in the 1997 special coverage, one witness told the Committee that “there was no discussion of that at all,” while another told the committee, “I argued that we should both correct (the articles) and apologize.”

Since 1992 various reports and papers—not to mention articles in other newspapers—had been published that undermined the credibility of the Yoshida testimony. In addition, with the rise of the textbook issue, Asahi Shimbun columns and other articles that took up the Yoshida testimony were being attacked. Given the prevailing situation at the time, this Committee concludes that the handling of the Yoshida testimony was as weighty an issue for the newspaper as providing a definitive summation of the comfort women issue. Furthermore, given the situation at the time, it is inconceivable that there would have been no opinions voiced at all within the newspaper on whether or not the testimony should be corrected and an apology made. In internal documents from the time there is an entry that reads: “If we do not do it in this special coverage, we will miss the chance to correct the Yoshida testimony.” Judging from this, it should be concluded that the subject was debated multiple times from multiple angles.

Following further discussion on how to handle the Yoshida testimony now that it had proven impossible to get another interview with Yoshida himself, it was decided to address the Yoshida testimony once again in the special coverage, and to use the expression, “no confirmation has been made about the authenticity.”

It appears that the Political News Section believed the newspaper should make more complete corrections and/or issue an apology. However, there was no discussion specifically on this point at review sessions or on other occasions.

(5) Assessment of the failure to correct or retract the Yoshida testimony

There are those among the parties involved who maintain that the relevant text in the 1997 special coverage does constitute a correction of the Yoshida testimony. However, it is not really possible to view the coverage as a “correction.”

The assessments of the overall tone of the 1997 special coverage by those involved at the time varied from those who said that, “Looking back from where we are today, there was absolutely nothing wrong with the decision we made at the time” to those who said they feel “repentance and regret.”

Those arguing that there was nothing wrong with the decision made the following arguments: a) it cannot be proven that the testimony was a complete fabrication, b) Yoshida was still alive at the time, and there was a risk of a lawsuit if The Asahi Shimbun said his testimony was a fabrication, c) historical testimony should be adjusted not by corrections, but by the accumulation of new testimony, and d) other news organizations have not corrected their coverage of the Yoshida testimony either.

However, “correcting or retracting” the articles in question and declaring the Yoshida testimony to be a fabrication are not directly linked. As it would have been possible to avoid the risk of a lawsuit depending on the form that corrections or other measures took, arguments a) and b) do not stand. Meanwhile, refusing to correct or take other action for reasons c) and d) is dishonest to readers.

Assessing the decision from where we stand today, if the 1997 special coverage had indeed been prepared with the intention of providing a full reckoning of the comfort women issue as it stood at that point in time and of preparing the ground for future debate, then it should have corrected or retracted those articles written based on the Yoshida testimony and premised on so-called “coercion as narrowly defined”—that is, that the Japanese military and others present used coercive force to directly, forcibly take away women at the scene of recruitment—and should also have made the necessary apologies.

(6) On “coercion”

The 1997 special coverage’s handling of the Yoshida testimony was limited to the measures described above, and the coverage was dominated by an explication of the theory of so-called “coercion as broadly defined.”

The word “coercion” is extremely vague, and encompasses a broad range of meanings. It is beyond the scope of this Committee’s mandate to assign a definition to “coercion” or to argue the “coerciveness” of the comfort women system.

However, it can be stated here that The Asahi Shimbun had not consistently focused on so-called “coercion as broadly defined” from the outset. Quite the contrary, from the 1980s until 1992, when doubts began to be raised about the credibility of the Yoshida testimony, it was The Asahi Shimbun itself that took the lead in stridently reporting “coercion as narrowly defined,” as described above.

Without even acknowledging that in the past The Asahi Shimbun itself had loudly reported on “coercion in the narrow sense,” the 1997 special coverage attacked the kind of thinking that restricted “coercion” to “coercion in the narrow sense,” and instead relied upon the Kono statement to emphasize the existence of “coercion in the broad sense.” This argument of the special coverage is a switching of the focus of the discussion.

7. Developments from the 1997 Special Coverage up until the 2014 Special Coverage

(1) Assessment of the 1997 special coverage inside and outside the company

The 1997 special coverage did not provoke a particularly strong reaction. The Committee finds no cases of the special coverage being taken up in a significant way by other newspapers and media.

However, approximately a year after publication, a written inquiry was received from Yoshiko Sakurai, a journalist and writer, via *Shukan Shincho* magazine asserting that the special coverage had not touched on The Asahi Shimbun's error in promoting coverage of the Yoshida testimony, and asking for the reason why.

In response, the Public Affairs Division replied along the lines that the nature of historical testimony is such that it is refined through a process of criticism and counter-criticism on the way to ascertaining the truth, and that, therefore, if the intent of the question was to ask why The Asahi Shimbun had not issued an article correcting the testimony, it was because that is not the nature of historical testimony.

It would be difficult to call this reply a serious attempt to squarely address Sakurai's question.

(2) Handling of the Yoshida testimony after the 1997 special coverage

Following the 1997 special coverage, the City News Section editor responsible for the coverage issued an internal company directive reading: "Going forward, do not use the Yoshida testimony in the pages of the newspaper." However, it cannot be said that there was much awareness of this directive within the company.

In 2001, The Asahi Shimbun's Public Relations Center prepared a series of model answers for questions on different themes that were frequently sent to the newspaper, including nuclear power, the Japan Self-Defense Forces, and perceptions of history. Among these model replies, the reply prepared for the model question, "The Asahi Shimbun previously ran the lies of Seiji Yoshida in the paper just as is, and it still hasn't corrected them" reads: "(The Asahi Shimbun) wrote in the following special coverage (i.e., the March 31, 1997 special coverage) that there are some voices questioning (the Yoshida testimony)."

This reply says neither that the paper has "corrected" nor has "not corrected" the testimony, and is inadequate.

(3) Why the apology was delayed until 2014

As seen above, neither the reply to Sakurai nor the model reply for Asahi Shimbun readers prepared by the Public Relations Center respond squarely to the question: "Aren't you going to correct it?" The final resolution of the Yoshida testimony was left hanging in an ambiguous state even within the company itself, and it continued that way without further examination until the 2014 special coverage.

The first factor behind this was a lack of awareness of being the party concerned in the matter. Within the company there was little sense of ownership of articles that one had not been directly involved in oneself, as seen in the words of people who told this Committee that the Yoshida testimony articles had been the work of the Osaka City News Section, and it would have been out of the question for the Tokyo City News Section to retract articles by the Osaka City News Section.

Second, we can cite insufficient handing over of data and materials to successors in the workplace in an environment where the general assignment reporters assigned to the City News Section were all pursuing their own areas of interest and there was no permanent post of “reporter on the comfort women issue” to ensure continuity. There were not even any clear rules in place for editors with regard to passing on materials.

Third, regarding the correction and retraction of articles, we can cite the absence of any unified standards or thinking on the subject at the company level, leading to unclear rules for correcting and retracting articles.

Fourth, we can cite inadequate efforts to build mutual understanding within the company and a failure to develop a corporate culture to allow for active in-house discussion. Had there been more mutual understanding and discussion within the newspaper, the issue might have attracted greater interest throughout the company, leading to some clear outcome.

(4) The 2012 preliminary investigation

In December 2011, a comfort woman statue was erected in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, and the government of South Korea began to play up the comfort women issue as a political issue. Triggered by this development, The Asahi Shimbun’s coverage again became the target of criticism at home.

In May 2012, then Executive Editor Shinichi Yoshida consulted with then Foreign News Editor Tsutomu Watanabe and decided to launch an investigation into the Yoshida testimony issue. Three people were selected to head this secret investigation, which was not predicated on producing an article for publication.

At about this same time, the presidency of the Asahi shifted from President Akiyama to President Kimura, and a new structure was put in place at the top, with Nobuyuki Sugiura serving as General Editor and Kenichi Fukuchi as General Manager. The plan to investigate the Yoshida testimony issue was also conveyed to these individuals.

Rumors began to be heard in the autumn of 2012 that if a Shinzo Abe administration came into power there might be a reconsideration of the Kono statement, and that even Asahi Shimbun senior executives could be summoned to stand as sworn witnesses before the Diet. These rumors became an additional motivation for the investigation, which consisted of an attempt to determine the present whereabouts of Yoshida, and debriefs with the main reporters involved. As it was found that Yoshida was now deceased, the newspaper instead interviewed his son.

The investigation was largely complete by January 2013. However, from the

beginning it had not been intended to generate an article, so the results were filed and the case closed.

8. The August 2014 Special Coverage

(1) The preparation of the special coverage

Beginning in mid-February 2014 there was a growing sense of crisis that, should the government reassess the Kono statement, The Asahi Shimbun's own past posture toward coverage of the issue would once again be called into question. There was a growing belief within the company that there was no choice but to carry out a full-scale reexamination.

In addition, The Asahi Shimbun's reporting on the comfort women issue continued to come under attack from other media organizations, and there were even increasing numbers of people among The Asahi Shimbun's own readership who were losing trust in the paper. As this was beginning to impact circulation and advertising, there was a growing belief from a sales and public relations perspective as well that the issue could not just be left to rest.

It was in this environment that Sugiura, appointed Executive Editor on March 1 of that year, took over the investigation of The Asahi Shimbun's comfort women issue coverage from his predecessor and, almost immediately upon his appointment as Executive Editor and after asking President Kimura's opinion and securing his approval, informed General Editor Watanabe and General Manager Ichikawa about his plan to create a special coverage team.

By this time the government had announced its intention to investigate the circumstances leading up to the issuance of the Kono statement. As there was a possibility the Yoshida testimony would once again come up for discussion in such an inquiry, it was decided to focus the newspaper's own investigation on the Yoshida testimony with the aim of producing the special coverage by the end of 2014 at the latest, all the while monitoring the results of the government inquiry.

As for the Yoshida testimony itself, it had been the general position of The Asahi Shimbun for some time that it had in effect corrected the Yoshida testimony in the 1997 special coverage. Nonetheless, it continued to come under attack from critics who charged that it was impossible to view that special coverage as a correction and that consequently the newspaper still had not corrected the testimony. That being the case, it would be necessary to carry out a much more thorough background check than before for the 2014 special coverage.

Management identified the 2014 special coverage as a crisis management issue, and it was decided that company executives, too, would have input on the content.

(2) Composition and reporting content of the 2014 special coverage team

A) Composition of the team

In late March 2014, The Asahi Shimbun set up a team to carry out the above investigation.

The main team members involved in the preparation of the 2014 special coverage

were Executive Editor Sugiura, General Editor Watanabe, an Editorial Board member, a senior staff writer, a Foreign News Section reporter who had served as a foreign correspondent in Seoul, a Korean-speaking reporter from the Tokyo City News Section and a reporter from the Political News Section. In the course of the investigation, one reporter from the Osaka City News Section was added to the team. A Tokyo City News Section desk editor was assigned to serve as desk editor coordinating the work in the newsroom. In addition, and primarily for crisis management purposes, Asahi advisor Shoei Tsuyama was asked to serve as an advisor on the project in addition to the head of Public Affairs Division, an assistant to the General Manager and others. General Manager Ichikawa had personally written some of the articles about Yoshida and was therefore left off the project team at the initial planning stage, but he later became involved from July 2014 in an advisory role.

B) Overview of the reporting

a. Corroborative investigation of Yoshida testimony

The reporter responsible for overseas reporting spent one week on Jeju Island interviewing approximately 40 people. He visited locations cited in Yoshida's books and interviewed village heads and elderly residents there, but was unable to uncover any stories corroborating the kind of forcible taking away of women described in Yoshida's testimony. When he met with a former researcher for the Korean Research Institute for *Chongshindae* (comfort women) in Seoul, he found that the researcher had also carried out investigations on Jeju Island but had been unable to secure any testimony that corroborated Yoshida's writings.

During the team's research within Japan, team members spoke with Yoshida's son and also received permission to check the family register. As a result, it was determined that Yoshida had married his wife after the date he had given in his testimony as the day his wife made a diary entry about the issuance of his mobilization order (from the Western District Army). Moreover, it was determined that the diary itself could not be found and that Yoshida's son had no memory of hearing any stories from him about the forcible taking away of women.

An interview with the Chuo University professor Yoshimi determined that—based on notes and other documents from his May 1993 interview with Yoshida—he (Yoshida) had made comments to the effect that he had had no choice but to embroider his story to keep from identifying the names of his comrades who had also requisitioned the women. It was determined that, as far as Yoshida's testimony regarding the forcible taking away of women on Jeju Island was concerned, Yoshida had himself acknowledged that the times and places he had provided were fabrications.

The reporting team was further told by University of Tokyo Associate Professor Masaru Tonomura and Kyoto University Professor Kazu Nagai that the contents of the Yoshida testimony conflicted with the military chain of command and the deployment of Japanese Army forces on Jeju Island and were inconceivable.

Based on these results, the investigative team concluded that the testimony that Yoshida forcibly took away comfort women on Jeju Island was a fabrication.

b. Interviews with writers of earlier articles

Among the articles that had previously quoted Yoshida as a witness to the forcible taking away of comfort women, there were some for which the writers could no longer be determined. However, regarding those articles for which it was possible to identify the writers, the team interviewed them about the circumstances and process of preparing the pieces. The team also interviewed the authors of articles that were not subject to retraction, but that nonetheless had been heavily criticized. These were the articles published in the newspaper on January 11, 1992; August 11, 1991; and December 25, 1991.

(3) Timing of the special coverage

The initial plan had been to publish the special coverage in late June 2014, after the government announced the results of its examination into the Kono statement, so the coverage could reflect the results of that investigation. However, in order to avoid the FIFA World Cup period, the newspaper's subscription collection period, and the period when weekly news magazines would be publishing their special summer double-issues, the publication dates were finally set for August 5 and August 6.

(4) The checking process

A) Involvement of company executives

At a management meeting in May 2014 attended by the directors of the board, executive officers and others, President Kimura noted that the newspaper was working on an examination of the comfort women issue and Sugiura explained the outline of the project.

From early July 2014 on, Sugiura, Hisashi Yoshizono (responsible for public affairs) and Fukuchi (newly appointed Head of the Office of the President) examined the particulars of the coverage in their capacity as the company executives responsible for crisis management. After consulting with President Kimura, they issued directives to the investigative team.

A proposal for the content lineup and layout of the special coverage pages was prepared, and a roundtable of the managing directors (known as an "expanded managing directors meeting," and referred to as such hereafter) was convened on July 17 to examine it. In addition to the participants at regular managing directors meetings, the director responsible for sales also took part, as did Sugiura, Yoshizono, Watanabe, and Ichikawa.

Following the July 17 expanded managing directors meeting, the company's policy toward the special coverage was further discussed at management conference roundtables on July 24 and August 1, and the final policy was decided.

B) Changes to the special content lineup and layout

In early July 2014, a proposed layout using galley proofs of the articles prepared by the investigative team was produced over the course of two days. This layout devoted

eight pages to the coverage (a front page column and seven additional pages) and was designed to carefully explain and gain the readers' understanding of the comfort women issue from the ground up. However, concerns were raised that devoting seven entire pages to the special coverage would seem excessive, and might leave the average reader wondering if something else was going on behind the scenes. In the end, it was decided to go with one front-page column and a total of four inside pages, to be published over two days.

As a result, many of the subjects that were originally going to be covered in the special coverage were either dropped or abbreviated. These included a box containing summaries of the articles being retracted, a Q&A section on the basics of the comfort women issue, an article on how the issue had evolved into a social problem (and whether or not this was a result of The Asahi Shimbun's coverage), and the issue of comfort women statues in the United States.

C) Handling of the Yoshida testimony

Regarding the Yoshida testimony, there were initially opinions within the newspaper that The Asahi Shimbun should both correct or retract the articles and issue an apology. At the same time, however, there were others who were uncomfortable with the idea of corrections and retractions.

Unlike the 1997 special coverage, however, this time not only had it proven impossible to corroborate the Yoshida testimony, it had also turned out to be quite possible to find documentation that suggested the testimony was a fabrication. In light of this, and at the strong insistence of the General Editor, the investigative team's policy came together around both correcting and apologizing for past articles. By July 15 a draft version of the pages had been prepared that clearly stated, both in the column and in the interior sidebar articles, that the newspaper was both correcting the past articles and issuing an apology.

At a meeting between President Kimura, Watanabe, and the company executives responsible for crisis management on July 16, the day before the expanded managing directors meeting, Kimura voiced the opinion that he was opposed to issuing an apology. As a result, at the expanded managing directors meeting on the following day, a proposal was presented that did not include the apology.

Various concerns were expressed at the expanded managing directors meeting. These included concern that if the newspaper apologized, it might be taken by readers as a refutation of the very existence of the comfort women issue itself, or alternatively, that by apologizing the newspaper might conversely lose its readers' trust.

On the other side, concern was expressed that if The Asahi Shimbun continued to report on the comfort women issue as before without even making an apology, it could be perceived as being unrepentant.

Ultimately, following the management conference roundtable on August 1, a policy decision was made that, as concerned the Yoshida testimony, The Asahi Shimbun would determine that the testimony was a fabrication and would make a retraction in the special coverage. However, it would not issue an apology, but instead would

“reflect on its past conduct” in a first-page column by the Executive Editor.

(5) Situation after publication of the special coverage

The original thinking had been that The Asahi Shimbun would publish follow-on reports in response to the reaction to its special coverage and the questions raised about it. However, given the extremely negative reaction to the coverage in newspapers, the weekly magazines and other quarters, it was judged that attempting to counter each and every objection raised would only serve to pour oil on the fire and would be undesirable from a crisis management perspective. In the end, other than carrying an article on August 28 to the effect that the Kono statement was not dependent on the Yoshida testimony, the newspaper decided not to print any follow-up reports.

(6) Overview of the special coverage

[Abridged]

(7) Assessment of the special coverage

A) Regarding the executive editor column

The question of what kind of appeal the newspaper should make to its readers in the executive editor column had profound meaning for The Asahi Shimbun. Yet in the end, the tenor of the column did not go beyond saying simply that, as a newspaper, “we do reflect on the fact that there was insufficient information gathering to support those articles.” Instead, it went on to argue that “the essence of the comfort women issue is that women had their freedom taken away and their dignity as women trampled upon,” while pointing out that other media had also made the same mistakes.

The composition of the special coverage failed to convey the sincerity of The Asahi Shimbun, and the newspaper came in for a storm of criticism.

B) Regarding the section: “Forcibly taken away”

Since the 1997 special coverage there had been no fundamental change in The Asahi Shimbun’s assertion that the essence of the question of whether or not there had been any “forcible taking away” of women to serve as comfort women lies in the existence of “coercion as broadly defined”—namely, that women had their freedom taken away from them and their dignity harmed in comfort stations.

However, having definitively ascertained that the Yoshida testimony about forcibly taking away women was a fabrication, and having retracted the relevant articles, the newspaper at this point should have gone on to examine whether or not the Yoshida testimony had had any impact on the debate about “coerciveness” and the forcible taking away of women. By choosing instead to put the issue of “coercion as broadly defined” ahead of the retraction of the Yoshida testimony, and by further concluding in the special coverage section on “forcibly taking away” that “The Asahi Shimbun’s perception of this issue has not changed,” this column had the converse effect of preventing the intended message that The Asahi Shimbun was sorry about the

Yoshida testimony articles from reaching the readers, and instead left the impression that the newspaper was not sincere.

C) Regarding the section: “Testimony about ‘forcibly taking away of women on Jeju Island’”

This section examining the Yoshida testimony was the single most important point of the 2014 special coverage, and this time the newspaper did indeed carry out a detailed investigation.

However, in retracting the articles concerned, The Asahi Shimbun could have avoided simply stating its conclusion, and instead gone on to address the circumstances behind the initial decision to run the stories and the reasons why it had taken until 2014 to finally decide to retract them. This would have enabled the newspaper to indicate how seriously it took the fact that this situation had occurred, as well as demonstrate to readers its resolution to prevent such a thing from ever happening again. To the degree that the special coverage examined neither the circumstances leading up to the publication of these retracted stories nor the reasons why the decision to retract them came so late, the 2014 special coverage was inadequate.

a. Inadequate investigation into the circumstances behind using the Yoshida testimony in articles

There is nothing in the 2014 special coverage regarding whether any corroborative investigations were carried out into the content of the Yoshida testimony when the newspaper cited it in articles subsequent to its first report on Yoshida on September 2, 1982, nor is there any mention of how to assess that. Likewise, there is no explanation of why the newspaper continued to cite the Yoshida testimony in articles published after April 1992, when doubts had already been raised about its credibility.

b. Absence of an explanation for the delayed retraction

Once doubts were raised about the Yoshida testimony in 1992, the sincere response for a newspaper would have been not to ignore those charges, but instead to report both the fact that doubts had been raised and the details of those doubts. It should then have informed its readers as quickly as possible of the objective reality that it had now become impossible for it to determine which of its past articles treating the Yoshida testimony as the truth were in fact true, and which were not.

The way that The Asahi Shimbun instead chose to take only a passive response of reducing its coverage of the Yoshida testimony without proactively investigating the credibility of the testimony itself was a manner of journalism that should be criticized.

The 2014 special coverage neither explains nor evaluates the reasons for the delay in retracting the articles. Nor does it offer any opinion on whether the cumulative coverage of the Yoshida testimony had any impact on society. Given how historically long the process had been, what was needed at this point was not an attitude that it was simply enough to make the articles go away, but rather a willingness to demonstrate to the readers The Asahi Shimbun’s readiness to provide a full reckoning of where things stood today.

D) Regarding the section: “Documents showing military involvement”

a. As noted above, it is clear that the January 11, 1992 article on military involvement in comfort stations was prepared with the timing of the prime minister’s visit to South Korea in mind, and that it was intended to elevate the comfort women issue into a political issue. Furthermore, the inaccuracies in the keyword explanation of the term “military comfort women” that accompanied that article invited the misunderstanding of readers. We cannot deny the possibility that public opinion may have been moved by the inclusion of such a keyword explanation, and there should have been a serious investigation regarding this.

b. The conclusion of this section regarding military involvement notes that the government had already received a report that the documents reported in the article did exist prior to the publication of the article itself.

The likely intent of this section of the special coverage was to assert that the article in question was not a “surprise attack” on the government as critics had charged. However, as it is clear that the article in question was reported based on a belief that the comfort women issue should be addressed as a political issue during the prime minister’s visit to South Korea, it is not clear what point The Asahi Shimbun hoped to make by making this counterargument here.

It is indicative of the fact that, while the 2014 special coverage claimed that its intent was to clarify the essence of the comfort women issue, in reality it was slanted toward rebutting and defending the newspaper against criticism from the outside.

E) Regarding the section: “Confusion with the ‘Volunteer Corps’”

a. Up until around December 1991 there was an inadequate understanding of how the members of the “Women’s Volunteer Corps” and “comfort women” had been recruited, and there were grounds for thinking that among the women recruited for the Volunteer Corps there were some who were made to work as comfort women. Information regarding the numbers of women in the two categories was also complicated and confusing.

b. Beginning around January 1992, scattered articles began to appear (the January 16, 1992 article and others) suggesting that it might be erroneous to view comfort women and the Volunteer Corps as being one and the same.

In the same period, triggered by the filing of a lawsuit against the Japanese government by former comfort women and other parties, The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan had begun gathering plaintiffs, and Japanese groups supporting the lawsuit were collecting information via the “Comfort Women 110” hotline and other avenues. It is said that as a result it was increasingly clear that there were some women among the former members of the Volunteer Corps who had not been comfort women. From January 1992 on there was a quickly growing awareness that a distinction needed to be drawn between comfort women and the Volunteer Corps.

c. Given this sequence of events, the Committee understands that up until the differences between the Volunteer Corps and comfort women came to be widely understood in the period 1991-1992, a situation existed where numerous unclear expressions conflating the two could be found not only in the pages of The Asahi Shimbun but in other media as well. In that sense, we cannot say that there are errors in what was written about this subject in the 2014 special coverage.

However, any news organization needs to fully consider the accuracy of an article and to carefully and precisely explain matters on which research may still be under way in a manner that does not invite the misunderstanding of the reader. Further, once the research has been advanced, a news organization should act promptly and of its own accord to clear up any past misunderstandings.

Instead of simply explaining that the terms had been used incorrectly due to inadequate research, The Asahi Shimbun should also have demonstrated its corporate stance regarding circumstantial questions such as whether or not sufficient effort had been made to avoid the mistaken usage and whether corrections had been made once the error was discovered. Further, it should have shown what approach it would take to ensure that this kind of misuse and conflation of terminology did not happen again.

F) Regarding the section: “First testimony by former comfort woman”

Instead of simply concluding that there had been no deliberate distortion of the facts regarding this subject and ending its examination there, in the interest of accurately transmitting the facts to its readers The Asahi Shimbun should have used the occasion of its 2014 special coverage to examine this article in more detail, including what was written in the lead.

G) Other

a. The 2014 special coverage does not identify which articles were being retracted. The page layout originally produced by the special coverage team would have provided a detailed overview of the comfort women issue, including a list of retracted articles, an extensive timeline of selected significant events, and a piece on the circumstances leading to the comfort women question emerging as a social issue. This layout would have made it easier for readers to grasp the full picture of the comfort women issue. There were members of the investigative team who said that they regretted having followed the wishes of company executives and dropped those parts of the coverage.

The Asahi Shimbun’s original intent had been to address the information not carried on the pages of the August 5 and August 6 editions by running follow-up reports as appropriate. However, the criticism the special coverage received surpassed all expectations, and the newspaper missed the window for publishing follow-up articles.

Reflecting on this chain of events, we have no choice but to say that on the occasion of the 2014 special coverage The Asahi Shimbun, and particularly its management, lacked the will to address itself to its readers faithfully and seriously, and to respond carefully to them.

b. The Asahi Shimbun did announce 12 of the 16 articles that it had retracted in its October 10, 2014 morning edition. However, it did not specify the remaining four articles for various reasons, including that some had been written by outside writers. Of these four articles, the May 22, 1991 article by an Asahi Shimbun reporter described in detail the content of a lecture by Yoshida on the forcible taking away of comfort women, and it is inappropriate that it was left off the published list of retracted articles.

(8) Overall assessment of the 2014 special coverage

Late though it may have been, it took strong resolution for The Asahi Shimbun to return to the beginning and address disputed issues that had been the subject of controversy for many years to retell their story and examine them.

Yet its failure to apologize lacked perspective on both its role as a news organization and its stance toward its readers, and was not the decision that a newspaper should have made.

The answers to the items raised under the title *Dokusha no gimon ni kotaemasu* (Response to questions raised by readers) also fail to clearly address questions regarding what stance The Asahi Shimbun took on the issue of reparations for comfort women and charges that articles in the paper may have been slanted to match The Asahi Shimbun's own policy.

In particular, having already made the momentous decision to retract all of its articles related to the Yoshida testimony, the newspaper could have shown sincerity toward its readers by going on to examine why that retraction had been delayed until 2014, some 32 years after the first article was published, and to provide its own position on that question.

In sum, regarding the 2014 coverage, a posture of self-justification was prominent, and no sincere attitude of reflection was presented. That made it difficult to understand what The Asahi Shimbun was trying to say.

9. Decision-making regarding the 2014 special coverage

(1) The chain of events

There had been opinions voiced within The Asahi Shimbun itself that the articles dependent on the Yoshida testimony should be corrected and an apology made. However, as a result of discussions at the expanded managing directors meeting and other meetings comprised primarily of company executives, the opinions that carried the day were that an apology should not be made, and that using the word *hansei* (reflection on past conduct) would convey the meaning of apology. In the end, therefore, it was decided on the one hand to issue no apology, while on the other to retract 16 articles concerning Yoshida.

Regarding the scope and selection of articles for retraction or correction, it was evident that if the Yoshida testimony was in fact a fabrication, then all of the articles based on such fabricated testimony and, moreover, all of the articles concerning the person who had fabricated it, had not been based on reality. As it had already been decided not to make an apology, it was felt within the newspaper that it would be appropriate to take the strongest measures regarding the articles. In the end, it was decided to completely retract the articles themselves.

(2) Regarding the decision to retract 16 articles

When one considers that among the 16 articles in question there were some in which at least the surface facts were consistent with objective reality, the decision to respond not by correcting them but by retracting them in their entirety might appear somewhat roughshod. However, readers would assume that the veracity of the Yoshida testimony had been a prerequisite for articles that were based on that testimony or that reported Yoshida's claims that he himself took Korean women away from Jeju Island by violent means. The newspaper's decision to retract the articles could therefore be described as rational.

Nonetheless, if it had been concluded that Yoshida's testimony about forcibly taking away numerous Korean women on Jeju island for the purpose of making them work as comfort women was a fabrication, then The Asahi Shimbun should also have investigated and taken appropriate steps regarding other articles not included among the 16 articles chosen for retraction that cited Yoshida's testimony about forcibly taking away people other than comfort women.

(3) The decision not to apologize

When there have been mistakes made in reporting, the natural response would be to apologize and retract the report. Indeed, the "Fair and accurate reporting" clause in The Asahi Shimbun's own Reporters' Code of Conduct states:

1. Accuracy is the highest priority. Fabrication, distortion and articles not based on the facts most damage trust in reporting. [Abridged].
2. When a reporter discovers a mistake in an article, regardless of whether it was written by him or her, or by another reporter, he or she will take immediate measures to correct the mistake.

This being the case, when a mistake is discovered in the content of an article and the erroneous content is retracted, it would be appropriate to issue an apology along with the retraction. The decision not to apologize in the 2014 special coverage was a judgment based on excessive concern about a single aspect of the impact such an apology would have, and neglected the fact that a news organization's freedom of the press is only protected under Article 21 of the Constitution because it serves the citizenry's right to know. There was a lack of the role of a media organization to transmit the facts as well as a perspective of squarely facing ordinary readers.

(4) The principle of separating management from news editing and the response taken in this case

We know that company executives were involved in the preparation of the 2014 special coverage as a crisis management measure for the business side of the newspaper, but to the extent that The Asahi Shimbun is an organization engaged in the business of publishing a newspaper, it is not in and of itself out of the question for company executives to intervene to some degree in news editing. This Committee cannot necessarily deem it inappropriate, therefore, for company executives to have intervened in an article like the 2014 special coverage, which could possibly have had a powerful impact on The Asahi Shimbun's business.

However, the decision not to make an apology was a mistake by company executives. Since there were some in the News Department who opposed this decision by company executives, those who were opposed should have exhausted every possible argument and done their utmost to prevent such a decision from being made. At the same time, the Business Division and those in charge in the News Department should have taken such efforts seriously. In this case we cannot say that all possible efforts were made.

10. The Ikegami column

(1) Summary of events

A) During planning for the 2014 special coverage, the special coverage team asked Ikegami to write a commentary on the comfort women issue or, if that was not possible, to write about the special coverage itself in his existing column, *Shimbun naname-yomi* (Skimming the newspapers), that at the time was running in The Asahi Shimbun on the last Friday of each month.

Ikegami replied that it would be difficult for him to write a commentary on the content of the special coverage because of time constraints; however, the fact that such special coverage was being published was the kind of subject matter that should be discussed in the “Skimming the newspapers” column. He said he would like to write about it there.

B) Following the final decision to run the 2014 special coverage in the August 5 and August 6 editions, the Ikegami column on the coverage was scheduled for the August 29 edition.

On the afternoon of August 27, Ikegami sent his manuscript by e-mail to the editor responsible in the Op-Ed Section. The editor gave the column the title: *Ayamachi wa isagiyoku ayamaru beki da* (A straightforward apology should be made for mistakes).

C) At the time, company executives were closely monitoring the reaction of other newspapers and media to the special coverage. Reports about the coverage in other media were being read by the executives responsible for crisis management, in particular, Executive Editor Sugiura, Yoshizono (responsible for public affairs), Fukuchi (head of the Office of the President), and President Kimura himself. The crisis management executives were also to review the contents of the Ikegami column on the 2014 special coverage as soon as it arrived.

After receiving the Ikegami column, the editor responsible distributed it, delivering a proof sheet to General Editor Watanabe and also placing a copy on the desk of the assistant to the General Manager. In addition, proof sheets were distributed to General Manager Ichikawa, as well as to Sugiura, Yoshizono, and Fukuchi. Kimura saw the column, too.

At the time he received the manuscript, Watanabe felt there would be no problem publishing it. However, on the evening of August 27 Watanabe learned that Kimura had reservations about the column, and it was decided that it could not be run as is. Accordingly, Watanabe asked the editor responsible for Ikegami’s columns if something along the following lines might be possible: (1) ask Ikegami to rewrite his column on a different theme; (2) cancel plans to publish the column; (3) give it a milder headline. The Op-Ed Section objected, arguing that as far as the first option was concerned, the theme was one that The Asahi Shimbun had requested Ikegami in the first place, and up until now the newspaper had in principle never asked for any changes to his columns, so it would be difficult to do so now. Regarding option (2), the Op-Ed Section argued that if the newspaper did this, it would be impossible to avoid having Ikegami cancel his column and the series would end in an extremely

unnatural way, with a risk that The Asahi Shimbun would come in for further criticism for “crushing” Ikegami’s column. After further discussion, it was decided late on the night of the 27th to try to run the column after changing the headline to the milder *Teisei osokini shisshita nodewa* (Were the corrections too late?). It was decided that Sugiura would discuss it with President Kimura.

The result of this discussion was that the column still could not be run as is. Watanabe and the Op-Ed Section told Sugiura that if the newspaper did not run Ikegami’s column, the debate about the comfort women issue would be transformed into a debate about freedom of speech. Sugiura explained to them that the decision was a business decision made from a crisis management perspective. In the end, it was decided that Watanabe and the editors concerned would meet with Ikegami on the evening of August 28 and explain why they would not run the column.

D) In the meeting with Ikegami, Watanabe explained that, from a crisis management perspective, The Asahi Shimbun could not run his column as is, and asked if he would rewrite it to tone down the section on the lack of an apology. Ikegami replied that while some small changes in the wording might be possible, he could not possibly revise a portion of the column related to the main pillar of his argument, and it was impossible for him to change the column’s call for The Asahi Shimbun to apologize. Further, Ikegami said that if this was not acceptable to The Asahi Shimbun, his pride as a journalist would not accept it, and he would terminate his column in the newspaper.

Watanabe and the editors replied to the effect that they would like some time to think about the matter of terminating the column, and the meeting ended at that point. In light of what Ikegami had said, The Asahi Shimbun subsequently looked into ways to wind down the “Skimming the newspapers” column, and also discussed these with Ikegami.

E) Following on from these events, from September 1 on, *Shukan Shincho* magazine, *Shukan Bunshun* magazine and other publications began to interview Ikegami and in addition submitted inquiries to The Asahi Shimbun itself on the subject of The Asahi Shimbun refusing to run Ikegami’s column. It was clear that word had leaked that The Asahi Shimbun had refused to publish the column. The Asahi Shimbun’s reply to these inquiries was: “As far as our company is concerned, we have not formally decided to suspend publication. We will continue to discuss this matter with Akira Ikegami in good faith.”

Before the news was reported in the press, The Asahi Shimbun had briefly considered printing a notice that the “Skimming the newspapers” column had ended. However, on September 3 the decision was made to run Ikegami’s manuscript exactly as written. The newspaper contacted Ikegami and explained that it would like to run his column as was, together with an explanation by The Asahi Shimbun of the circumstances. Ikegami agreed to the running of his column on the condition that the newspaper would also print his own comments on the chain of events. The Asahi Shimbun ran the Ikegami column, together with The Asahi Shimbun’s explanation of the circumstances and Ikegami’s own comments, in the September 4, 2014 edition.

(2) The Asahi Shimbun’s explanation of why it refused

to publish Ikegami's manuscript

A) Explanation of the circumstances behind the decision not to publish

Regarding the circumstances behind its decision to refuse publication of Ikegami's column manuscript, Kimura offered an explanation to the effect that he had offered only his personal impressions of the manuscript, and that it had been Sugiura who made the decision to cancel publication.

However, when the newspaper first received the column manuscript from Ikegami on August 27, the News Department, including the Executive Editor, had planned to run the column as is. It was at that point that Kimura expressed reservations. Those in the News Department could not resist Kimura's opinion and it was decided to refuse publication. Consequently, we conclude that the refusal to publish was based on the decision effectively made by Kimura.

In addition, as the News Department was opposed to this decision, those opposed should have stated all their opinions, exhausted every possible argument, and done their utmost to avoid the outcome of refusing publication. At the same time, company executives and those in charge in the News Department should have taken their efforts seriously. In this case we cannot say that all possible efforts were made.

B) Explanation of the negotiations with Ikegami

At the point when it was decided Ikegami's manuscript could not be published as written, the editor responsible for Ikegami's columns was aware that there was a high possibility the column itself would be cancelled. The editor had also been told by Ikegami himself that he would like to end his column. We therefore conclude that, even if the negotiators (Watanabe and the editors) said that they "would like some time to think" and left the meeting with Ikegami without immediately agreeing to the cancellation of the column, the decision to end the column was effectively made at the time. Indeed, it was Ikegami's own understanding that the decision to end his column was made on August 28.

The Asahi Shimbun explained the situation to reporters from other publications by saying that "We will continue to discuss this matter with Akira Ikegami in good faith." Given these circumstances, it must be said that was an interpretation of the contents of the discussions held with Ikegami overly in favor of the Asahi Shimbun.

11. The Principle of Separating Company Management from News Editing

(1) The principle of separating management from news editing

It is generally understood that the “freedom of the press” of a newspaper company is protected under Article 21 of the Japanese Constitution. At the same time, however, the coverage of the news by a newspaper company is performed as the business of that company, and it is possible in and of itself for company executives to have the right to intervene in the content of that coverage.

However, should it happen that the content of coverage is distorted through the inappropriate interference of company executives in that content, it then becomes impossible to achieve the purposes of news coverage recognized under the freedom of the press. This has led to the championing of the notion that the news function and the business function should be kept separate, and that final decisions affecting news editing should be made by responsible parties in the News Department who have no involvement in management (the principle of separating company management from news editing).

(2) The involvement of company executives in the 2014 special coverage

Yet, while the concept of separating company management from news editing is extremely important for the healthy development of freedom of speech in a democratic society and is a principle that should be observed by a newspaper company, it is not impossible in and of itself for management to intervene in the editorial process, within reasonable parameters, when crisis management is required for the newspaper company organization as a whole.

If we examine the intervention of company executives in the 2014 special coverage premised on this understanding, we can conclude that, in light of the situation in which The Asahi Shimbun had been placed in recent years, this was a time when crisis management was required, and that some intervention within reasonable parameters by company executives in the content of the newspaper’s news coverage was not out of the question.

However, in the case of the 2014 special coverage, from the initial planning of the project through to the actual content of the pages themselves, the “crisis management” by executives went much too far. Numerous decisions made on the newsroom floor were reversed in the name of the grand cause of “defending the company.” As a result, the content on the comfort women issue—the most important issue of all—proved unpersuasive to both the general readers and to society at large, and ultimately the crisis management effort itself was a failure. In that sense as well, The Asahi Shimbun should take this opportunity to once again reconfirm the importance of preserving the separation of company management from news editing in a news organization and strictly maintaining to the maximum extent possible a forum for free and open speech by reporters.

(3) The intervention of company executives in the Ikegami column

Regarding the decision to refuse publication of the Ikegami column, those involved explain that it was the result of viewing the issue from a crisis management perspective. This is a narrow and inward-looking argument that lacks perspective on both the role of a news organization as discussed above and the presence of the ordinary readers. This Committee has no choice but to conclude, therefore, that there was inappropriate intervention in the decision in terms of the principle of separating management from news editing.

(4) In conclusion

In light of the challenging environment faced by the newspaper industry in recent years, The Asahi Shimbun launched the Kimura administration in 2012, at a time when the most critical issue facing the newspaper was how best to overcome the same medium- and long-term business crisis that was then affecting all newspapers with the arrival of the full-fledged Internet era. By bringing the company's digital strategies up to speed and promoting his concept for cutting costs by promoting an in-house company system, Kimura emphasized quick judgment with nimble decision-making and implementation of decisions, and worked to further concentrate authority in the board of directors. There were people who told the Committee that Kimura was picked to lead the company precisely because of his nimble judgment and decision-making and his ability to make things happen. The latest round of problems with The Asahi Shimbun's coverage of the comfort women issue took place within this new management structure.

The 2014 special coverage was one piece in the crisis management effort born of this structure. At the same time, even as it was shifting away from its old style of consensus management, The Asahi Shimbun was experiencing harassment of its employees and distributors and attacks on the company itself. Through their excessive concentration on the internal crises facing the company, senior executives of The Asahi Shimbun had lost the ability to accurately discern their external environment. Through our investigation, we glimpse a situation in which the opinions of the general readers, extremist opinions in certain quarters of society, the judgments of other companies in the same industry, and the opinions of society at large were all debated together as if they were one and the same. It is this Committee's conclusion that, as failure followed failure, the management of The Asahi Shimbun had lost the ability to carefully debate these many different issues and to take appropriate countermeasures.

12. The Impact on International Society

Regarding the impact on international society, four members of this Committee approached the question from their own professional viewpoints, resulting in three separate studies of the subject from different perspectives that were reported back to the Committee. The Committee discussed and reviewed the conclusions of each study while referencing the appended supporting material, and concluded that each report should be treated as a separate report of the Committee on the issue at hand.

(1) The impact on international society (Committee members Okamoto and Kitaoka)

One of the things asked most frequently when conducting public relations activities about Japan in Europe and the United States—but particularly in the United States—is the “comfort women” issue. This is due in part to Korean Americans having made the comfort women issue part of an organized campaign. Criticism of Japan on the subject continues unabated.

In addition, the Chinese government—with its sights set on 2015, the 70th anniversary of what is now called in China “the victory of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression”—is moving to strengthen its public relations campaign against Japan on a global scale. There are indications that it intends to roll out its own criticism of Japan over the comfort women issue.

There is a fixed perception of comfort women in the United States. For example, the December 2, 2014 edition of *The New York Times* ran an extensive piece on the comfort women issue written by one of its Tokyo correspondents. This piece contained the following passage:

Most mainstream historians agree that the Imperial Army treated women in conquered territories as spoils of battle, rounding them up to work in a system of military-run brothels known as comfort stations that stretched from China to the South Pacific. Many were deceived with offers of jobs in factories and hospitals and then forced to provide sex for imperial soldiers in the comfort stations.

Be it in this *New York Times* article, or among the foreign experts that we interviewed for this study, we find that the image that the Japanese military directly, systematically, violently and premeditatedly abducted many women, unleashed violence on them and forcibly made them serve as comfort women is quite entrenched.

It is difficult to conclude that the Yoshida testimony played a major role in constructing this image, and the evidence that *The Asahi Shimbun* exercised major influence on the formation of the image is not definitive.

Nonetheless, *The Asahi Shimbun* and other media in Japan have, over time, in effect “endorsed” the extreme statements regarding the comfort women issue emanating from South Korea. Among those media, *The Asahi Shimbun* was in a leadership role. That endorsement has encouraged the extreme criticism of Japan over the comfort women issue in South Korea, and further escalated it.

As viewed from other countries, if media in South Korea criticize Japan, and major media within Japan agree with that criticism, it is not unreasonable to then believe that Japan is in the wrong. It is in this sense that The Asahi Shimbun can be considered to have exercised power in the formation of an exaggerated image of the comfort women issue.

Japan naturally should work to rebut the incorrect images of the comfort women issue held overseas. It is not reported outside Japan that private and governmental atonement funds have been delivered to former comfort women via the Asian Women's Fund, that prime ministers of Japan sent letters of apology to individual comfort women, and further, that a considerable number of comfort women were Japanese. It is also true that there are many Japanese who feel exasperated that only the one-sided assertions of South Korea are treated as established fact.

However, no matter how Japan chooses to respond as a nation, it will not be easy. This is because rebuttals by the Japanese side in many cases serve only to pour oil on the fire. Even regarding the retraction of The Asahi Shimbun articles that cited the Yoshida testimony, foreign experts counter that this testimony was only one small part of the larger issue, and it generates new interest among the general public overseas who wonder that "there used to be that kind of system in Japan."

There have been many sources of friction for Japan in foreign public opinion until now, including the visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by past prime ministers, the Nanjing massacre, whaling, dolphin slaughters, derogatory comments about minorities and women by Japanese politicians and more. However, there is no problem more serious or intractable for Japan than the comfort women issue. While this is a matter that transcends the mandate of this Committee, it is time for a fundamental reassessment of how Japan should respond.

(2) The impact on international society
(Committee member Hatano)

When the comfort women issue emerged at the end of the 1980s in the process of South Korea's democratization, the "forcible taking away" of requisitioned laborers on the Korean peninsula was the main focus of contention between Japan and South Korea. However, the focus moved to the comfort women issue, reframing it in terms of the presence, absence, or degree of "coercion" at the time of recruitment, and that approach has continued to this day.

Throughout the 1980s, the reporting on Seiji Yoshida by The Asahi Shimbun focused on his role as one of the people who had forcibly requisitioned Koreans.

Within the Japanese government as well, wartime forced labor and comfort women were perceived as unrelated issues, so much so that in June 1990, in a reply to questions raised within the Diet, one ministerial aide simply noted that "it appears 'private-sector businesses' walked off with (comfort women)," and that an investigation into what actually took place would be difficult.

In August 1991, Kim Hak-sun became the first comfort woman to agree to be interviewed under her real name, and in December of the same year filed suit in

Tokyo District Court. The statements in the Diet provided one trigger for the case. The Japanese and South Korean governments, concerned that the issue might become a point of contention during Prime Minister Miyazawa's state visit to South Korea scheduled for early the following year, agreed that Japan should make a commitment to determine the truth of the matter, and issue an apology before the visit.

The Asahi Shimbun's article on "military involvement" that ran at the top of the front page in its January 11, 1992 morning edition was trumpeted by South Korean media as proving that there had been coercion by the Japanese military. It also drove criticism of Japan in South Korean public opinion even further toward demanding that the Japanese government determine the truth of the matter, issue an official apology, and pay reparations. Further, a report that appeared in the South Korean press just before Prime Minister Miyazawa's visit headlined "Even young girls (forced) into Volunteer Corps" combined with The Asahi Shimbun's coverage of "military involvement" to synergistic effect, mobilizing public opinion and spreading the movement to "denounce the Japanese government" beyond the cities and across the entire country. As a result, Prime Minister Miyazawa was forced to apologize and express his regrets time and time again during his visit. The reports in The Asahi Shimbun impacted Miyazawa's visit to South Korea, and South Korea deliberately sought to use them in its negotiations with Japan.

Partly due to the decision of the Japanese government to admit to military involvement and move quickly to issue an apology, Japanese and South Korean media continued to report the story as if the key issue was whether or not there had been military involvement and if so how much, and, in particular, whether women had been forcibly taken away at the time of recruitment. The Asahi Shimbun took a leading role in this. For The Asahi Shimbun, "military involvement" carried with it the meaning of coercion. The Asahi Shimbun wrote in a January 12, 1992 editorial that the Japanese authorities in Japanese-ruled Korea had "forced men into the roles of labor and military service, and women into the role of comforting the troops."

In July 1992, the Japanese government, based on its own investigations, acknowledged that there had been "involvement by the government" at various levels, including the establishment and supervision of comfort stations and oversight of the parties engaged in recruiting comfort women. Based on this, a statement was issued by Koichi Kato, then Chief Cabinet Secretary under Prime Minister Miyazawa, expressing the Japanese government's apology.

However, there had still been no documentation found that would indicate the existence of the organized, forcible taking away of women by the Japanese military on the Korean Peninsula. The government therefore expanded its investigation to all of Asia and released the results of that investigation in August 1993 in the form of the Kono statement, issued by Yohei Kono, who succeeded Kato as Chief Cabinet Secretary. The expression "coercion" was a center of contention in the drafting of the statement. The investigation had been unable to confirm the forcible taking away of women on the Korean Peninsula, but—reflecting the desire of the South Korean side—the statement included the expression: "their recruitment, transfer, control, etc., were conducted generally against their will."

The South Korean government praised the Kono statement as having “acknowledged overall coerciveness.” The fact that no documentation had been discovered that would indicate the forcible taking away of women served to set the terms of the domestic debate that continues in Japan to this day, that is, whether to apply the “broad” definition or “narrow” definition of coercion, and whether or not the comfort women system was an extension of Japan’s domestic system of licensed prostitution.

The Asahi Shimbun first predicated its discussion of the issue on “coercion as broadly defined” in its March 31, 1997 special coverage. By this time the Yoshida testimony had been debunked as proof that women had been “forcibly taken away,” but The Asahi Shimbun’s special coverage only noted that “no confirmation has been made about the authenticity” of the testimony. In contrast, the editorial published that same day asserted that “structuring the debate around whether or not the Japanese military directly took women away by force misses the essence of the problem,” and that, if one looked at the documentation and testimonies, “it is clear that conditions existed overall ... that should be called coercive.” Based on this, the editorial recognized the Kono statement as being “a natural conclusion.”

It is little wonder critics have charged that the newspaper—whose reporting up until that point had leaned toward “coercion as narrowly defined”—used the Kono statement as leverage to “switch” its argument once the precariousness of the Yoshida testimony became clear.

The April 2, 1997 editorial published two days later concluded, “the issue is that, under a war of aggression and colonial domination, with government and military involvement, many women had their dignity trampled upon against their will,” thereby shifting the burden of the argument to the dignity of women and human rights. This is clearly shown by the exceptional amount of coverage and high praise the newspaper accorded the 1996 Coomaraswamy Report (submitted by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, then United Nations special rapporteur on violence against women) and the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal held in Tokyo in 2000.

During this period The Asahi Shimbun was at first critical of the foundation-based approach represented by the Asian Women’s Fund, which had been launched as a national act of atonement in July 1995, and the newspaper proactively quoted voices critical of the fund. Then, over time, it settled on an evaluation along the lines that reparations by the state would have been desirable, but the fund was unavoidable as a second best policy. However, in its coverage of the Coomaraswamy Report and the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal, the newspaper used the voices of the NGOs that were supporting and assisting the report and the tribunal to once again criticize the Asian Women’s Fund. Thus it left the impression that governmental reparations by the state were the only proper option, diluting its previous, more accepting assessment of the fund.

In the 2000s, The Asahi Shimbun has consistently based its arguments on defense of the Kono statement and its own position that the “essence” of the comfort women issue is the human rights and dignity of women. One example is its contention in a March 10, 2007 editorial, stating, “Some media assert that the crux of the issue is whether the ‘forcible taking away’ of women occurred or not. However, this construction of the argument averts its eyes from the essence of the issue.” The

editorial goes on to conclude, “Consider it a question of the human rights of women and different ethnic groups, and squarely face one’s own history. Is that not what a dignified nation should do?”

The Asahi Shimbun time and again explains that the essence of the comfort women issue is the human rights and dignity of women. However, it is undeniable that this can give the impression the newspaper is hiding behind the “essence argument” without ever suggesting any realistic choices or strategies for resolving the problem.

The Asahi Shimbun repeatedly presented Yoshida on its pages as a person who had himself forcibly taken women away. However, these reports received no attention in either the domestic or foreign media. In that sense, these articles cannot be said to have helped propagate Japan’s international reputation as a country that insulted the dignity of women.

On the other hand, however, domestic forces within Japan that saw the Yoshida testimony as an insult to Japan’s own honor came to view the testimony as being one of the foundations of the Kono statement. When it became clear that the Yoshida testimony was a fabrication, these forces began to talk openly of re-evaluating the Kono statement, instantly inviting international outrage. The Kono statement, which took into account South Korean assertions on coercion to strike a delicate balance between both sides, is now in danger of losing the trust reposed in it by the international community. This, too, is one impact of the “fabricated” Yoshida testimony.

Lastly, there have been at least three opportunities to settle the comfort women issue at the government-to-government level. These were the 1993 Kono statement, the 1995 Asian Women’s Fund, and the 1998 summit meeting between South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. There is a need to ask once again why these various opportunities were lost.

(3) The impact on international society (Committee member Hayashi)

For this report on the subject of “The international impact of the coverage of comfort women issues in The Asahi Shimbun” I carried out a quantitative analysis of approximately 600 articles about the comfort women issue carried in 10 major newspapers in Britain, the United States, France, and Germany, together with approximately 14,000 articles carried in five major national dailies in South Korea over the past 20 years.

As a result, I determined that, while The Asahi Shimbun was the Japanese media outlet most frequently quoted by news organizations in the United States and Europe, the total number of stories quoting the newspaper numbered only 31.

When looking at the number of Japanese news organizations mentioned in these articles, the organization most frequently mentioned was NHK. This was because the comment made by NHK Chairman Katsuto Momii at a press conference upon his appointment in 2014 that “(such women) could be found in any nation that was at

war...” was picked up widely overseas, but that cannot by itself be fairly called an example of the influence of a news organization.

In contrast, The Asahi Shimbun was also widely quoted on many other issues, most notably the military base issues in Okinawa.

The Asahi Shimbun was also the Japanese media outlet most frequently cited in South Korean coverage of the comfort women issue. By number, there were 827 articles that mentioned The Asahi Shimbun, far more than the 378 mentions received by the Kyodo News Service, the next most frequently cited Japanese media outlet.

Turning next to the impact of coverage based on the testimony of Seiji Yoshida, up until August 5, 2014, there were only three articles printed in the European and U.S. newspapers surveyed that quoted the testimony. The impact of the Yoshida testimony must therefore be considered limited.

References to Seiji Yoshida in newspapers in South Korea were also not particularly numerous compared to the total number of articles on the comfort women issue. Articles mentioning Yoshida totaled 68. Of these, 21 articles cited the Japanese news media as their information source. Looking at these 21 articles, quotes taken from The Asahi Shimbun were the most numerous, appearing in a total of six articles.

Further, I examined articles published in the five South Korean newspapers covered by this study during the week immediately following the original publication of each of the 16 articles citing the Yoshida testimony that were retracted by The Asahi Shimbun on August 5, 2014. I found only one instance in which any of the 16 articles was quoted directly. This was an article that ran in the May 25, 1992, edition of the *Hankook Ilbo* newspaper.

In conclusion, it appears, based upon the above, that while the international influence of The Asahi Shimbun is relatively high in comparison to other Japanese media, when viewed in terms of total volume its influence is limited. Further, even where articles about the Yoshida testimony are concerned, it cannot be concluded that The Asahi Shimbun imparted authority to or legitimized Seiji Yoshida. Generally speaking, foreign media do reference The Asahi Shimbun, but they do so as only one information source among many, and its impact is not decisive.

Nonetheless, even though the name “Seiji Yoshida” may not appear explicitly, the image of the “forcible taking away” of women by the Japanese military does exist in news coverage in Europe and the United States, as well as in South Korea. However, records have also been found of people connected to the Japanese military forcing women into prostitution in locations other than the Korean peninsula—as in, for example, the Semarang Comfort Station Incident in Indonesia. These historical facts were also reported in the international press articles covered by this study. At this time, therefore, it is all but impossible to demonstratively track from a media effects theory perspective whether or not the image of the Japanese military’s coerciveness derives from coverage in The Asahi Shimbun or from other information sources.

In contrast to the limited influence of The Asahi Shimbun and the Yoshida testimony, it became clear through this study that the protagonist whose statements are most

often quoted, whose actions draw the most attention and who wields the most power to set the public agenda is Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The number of times Prime Minister Abe was quoted as an information source on the comfort women issue (he was quoted in 96 articles) and the frequency with which the prime minister was cited in total coverage (1,141 times) overwhelmed all other sources, making him a salient presence in coverage of the comfort women issue. While other prime ministers were also prominent—including Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama (20 quotations, 155 mentions) and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (17 quotations, 200 mentions)—Prime Minister Abe’s visibility outstripped theirs by a wide margin.

Further, during the two Abe administrations foreign media attention has focused on the activities of right-wing activists, conservative politicians, and others. The full-page “paid public comment” published in the June 14, 2007, edition of *The Washington Post* by The Committee for Historical Facts (composed of Koichi Sugiyama, Taro Yayama, Yoshiko Sakurai, Nobuaki Hanaoka, and Kohyu Nishimura) during the first Abe administration drew wide attention. Under the second Abe administration the comments of Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, and NHK Chairman Momii have all been reported internationally, and have served to boost the volume of articles overseas on the comfort women issue. Consequently, when we track the change in the volume of news coverage of this issue against the changes in administrations in Japan, we can see that volume increased strikingly during the first and second Abe administrations.

Another fact revealed by this study was that newspaper articles in Europe and the United States used many information sources in addition to those used in articles in Japan and South Korea.

Throughout the entire period studied, there were a relatively fixed number of other information sources cited in these articles, be they international organizations, sources of unknown national origin, or sources in the Philippines, the Netherlands, or other countries outside Japan, South Korea, and the United States. Examining the content of these multi-sourced articles, we find that a strikingly high number approached the issue from the perspective of universal humanitarianism or “the human rights of women.” This is in sharp contrast to Japan, where the comfort women issue has been viewed mainly as a Japan-South Korea or Japan-U.S. “diplomatic issue,” or as a debate on Japan’s image and the national interest. This study threw into sharp relief the gap between the tenor of coverage in Japan and the tenor of coverage in Europe and the United States that takes its cue from humanitarianism and women’s human rights.

As seen above, the study found that the international impact of *The Asahi Shimbun*’s coverage was limited. However, that outcome in no way diminishes the impact of the mistakes in judgment made by that company’s top managerial level nor the many problems in the way news coverage was conducted at the newspaper that have been pointed out elsewhere in this report. Those problems were of an entirely different nature and I would like to make this point again here.

(4) How it was conveyed to the world

[Abridged]

13. Summary

[Abridged]

14. Issues for Consideration and the Recommendations of the Third-Party Committee

Based upon the facts above and our assessment and analysis of those facts, this Committee proposes that The Asahi Shimbun Co. and all employees think deeply about the several points raised below, fix those issues that demand fixing, and start again from square one to make a new beginning.

(1) On the fundamental nature of news coverage

A) Awareness of the need to test for the presence or absence of the facts and to thoroughly examine the meaning of those facts, which is the precondition of news coverage

Among the various forms of newspaper coverage, special reports, investigative journalism, and similar special projects entail gathering information in line with the aims of that project, selecting what to use from among the information gathered, and then reporting it to the public. There may be times when in the course of this process facts and opinions contained in past information are found to conflict with the project's intended purpose.

In such cases, even if facts are found that are contrary to the project's intended purpose, a reporter must not ignore the existence of those facts but rather must point out their existence and clarify what relationship the existence of these facts may have to the project itself.

Many of the articles that caused problems in the current instance fell under the categories of special projects and investigative journalism. In the preparation of these articles, the fundamental nature of news coverage described above was neglected, and there was inadequate scrutiny of the presence or absence of facts in past reports or confirmation of such facts based on multiple sources. Regarding the Yoshida testimony, the existence of divergent opinions and facts contradicting the project's purpose had been pointed out, but they were still not addressed. Given that the subject matter in question harbors the potential to have a major impact on inquiries into the Japanese government's postwar responsibility, the above principles should have been even more strictly observed.

The reporters of The Asahi Shimbun need to think once more about the fundamental nature of news coverage described above, and to strive to ensure there is no disrespect for the facts.

B) Awareness that preconceptions can distort one's selection of the facts

People are prone to hold certain unconscious preconceptions or assumptions about the relationship that the state and public institutions should have to power, and about different ways of organizing society. The closer a newspaper reporter gets to the subject of his or her reporting, the more he or she is pulled into that subject's world and tends to share the preconceptions and assumptions of that world, and the harder it becomes to remain aware that this is happening. After gathering facts, it is valuable to pause for a moment and reflect upon this danger.

In the cases under consideration here, this Committee observed reporters falling easily into mistaken judgments about the facts, even in situations where one would not normally have expected them to do so.

The reporters of The Asahi Shimbun need to think once more about the fundamental nature of news coverage described above, and to strive to ensure that they do not lose their ability to maintain an appropriate distance between themselves and the subjects of their reporting. They also need to correct their own preconceptions and assumptions as much as possible to avoid a one-sided perception of the facts.

C) Awareness of the impact of an article

All newspaper coverage has an impact, large or small, on the people, organizations, society, politics, and other subjects of that coverage. A reporter must be fully cognizant of this fact. However, we observed many situations where we felt such awareness was lacking in the daily process of researching and preparing the articles considered here.

At the same time, there is also a danger that—through excessive belief in the power of the pen—reporters might fall prey to the delusion that they themselves wield a certain authority of their own. Trust in newspapers is extremely high in Japanese society, and when a mistake is made there is a serious risk that it will have wide-ranging consequences. The impact of news coverage is immense, and there may well be individuals and organizations that are badly hurt by it. Reporters must be fully cognizant that people could be affected or harmed because of their own articles, and that their responsibility is therefore that much greater.

Consequently, newspaper reporters must be fully cognizant of the various special privileges that make it possible for them to exercise this kind of influence, and recommit themselves to the spirit of reporting the facts without hiding behind those privileges. And if by some chance they do make a mistake, they must frankly and humbly admit to it.

The impression this Committee received from the special coverage in question was not one of humility, but rather of a newspaper with its head held high, looking down upon others. There were many among those involved in the preparation of the coverage who showed no real willingness to take responsibility.

The reporters of The Asahi Shimbun need to think once more today about the fundamental nature of news coverage described above. They need also to remind themselves of what it means to possess the authority that comes with covering the news, and of the fact that—precisely because they do wield that authority—when they make an error they must report it frankly and in all humility.

D) Awareness of personal responsibility for the articles reported

Matters reported in the press are generally taken to be true, and go on to become preconditions for people's subsequent behavior and developments in society. It is exactly because articles in the press have such serious implications that it is the duty

of a news organization to continuously confirm the veracity of the facts in articles it has reported, to follow up on future developments in the matters addressed in its articles and, when further information is obtained regarding those matters, to report that new information as well.

However, the Committee found that within The Asahi Shimbun it was rare for follow-up reporting to be entrusted to the same reporter continuously over time, even when a reporter wrote a prominent article. For articles such as those addressed in this report, the arrangements for passing on reporting to other reporters were vague.

While an article may have been written by a particular reporter belonging to one particular department in a newspaper, however, in the eyes of the reader that article is not an article by a reporter or a department, but by the newspaper itself. Consequently, if any reporter at all should obtain new information regarding the veracity of an article or the matters covered within it, then that reporter, whoever he or she might be, should report this fact.

At The Asahi Shimbun there was a culture of saying that such-and-such an article was the work of such-and-such a reporter or of such-and-such a department. There was a culture of not getting involved in the business of other reporters and other departments.

This culture must be reformed. Particularly with regard to difficult and controversial themes that divide public opinion, the reporters of The Asahi Shimbun need to think once more about the nature of sustained news coverage, to be fully aware of the consequences of their published articles, and to take this opportunity to remind themselves of the importance of sustained and continuous coverage of the news.

E) Awareness that articles are written for the readers

It should be only too obvious that newspaper articles are written for the readers. Nonetheless, in the present day, when newspaper companies are battling headwinds with the rise of online media and declining circulations, they have come to underrate this all-too-obvious fact.

The special coverage in question here took the form of an appeal to readers. However, the content was not tailored to the readers, but rather to the news industry itself in order to defend The Asahi Shimbun's own position against criticism by other newspaper companies, magazines, weeklies, and on the Internet.

If the special coverage had truly been directed at the readers, the resulting article would have shown sincerity in pointing out where the company had fallen short, explaining to the readers why this had happened, and elucidating what measures the newspaper planned to take in the future to correct those shortcomings. If the special coverage had been that kind of article, then it is likely that matters would not have come to the present pass, and The Asahi Shimbun would not have been criticized as harshly.

When a newspaper company has taken a specific position, it should face its readers squarely, and carefully explain that position to them based on the various facts.

The Asahi Shimbun has said that the special coverage in question resulted from crisis management on the company management side. However, there should never be a need for crisis management with one's readers. Reporting seriously on what is truly worth reporting is the best form of crisis management.

(2) Establishing procedures as a newspaper company for the times when errors are found in previous content

The Asahi Shimbun should take this present incident as an opportunity for exhaustive discussion of what steps should be taken when the content of a previously published article is determined to have been erroneous, and to establish countermeasures to prevent this in the future.

The Asahi Shimbun retracted 16 articles that cited the Yoshida testimony. However, no adequate discussion took place within the company as to why these 16 articles were retracted instead of corrected, which articles should be subject to retraction, or which specific parts of these articles were being retracted. To the very end, this Committee heard no logical explanation on these points.

As things stand now at The Asahi Shimbun, when a problem arises, moment-by-moment decisions made for the defense of the organization and management-side considerations take precedence, and there is no response taken as an organ of public opinion that can be passed down as a lesson to future reporters.

In journalism, it goes without saying that mistakes should be kept to the absolute minimum. However, there are times in the daily work of journalism when errors are unavoidable. Consequently, the Committee would like The Asahi Shimbun to examine what measures can be taken retroactively when misinformation has appeared in its pages, at the same time as creating a system to avoid as many errors as possible.

(3) Disclosing the composition of reporting teams, promoting the use of signed articles, and revealing the names of editorial writers

When it comes to large special projects like the 1997 and 2014 special coverage, there is no way for the reader to know just by looking at the pages of the newspaper itself who was selected from within the company to work on the project and who the writers of the individual articles were. Special features like these are not as time-sensitive as articles about crimes, accidents or similar incidents, and they also contain highly specialized content that can be expected to continue over time. That being the case, it is undeniable that it can come as a surprise to readers not familiar with the background context when large, anonymous articles like the special coverage in question appear in the paper.

It is possible that articles like the special coverage in question might seem more accessible to the readers if there were greater awareness in society at large that there are writers and project teams at newspapers who cover certain subjects on a continuing basis, and that, from time to time, they will issue reports on that subject as appropriate.

In that sense, the names of each article's writers and the composition of the reporting team for the special coverage was also information that The Asahi Shimbun should have made available to the readers proactively when the article came out.

Again, in the course of this Committee's investigation, there were instances where it ultimately proved impossible to identify the writers of certain articles. A more transparent editorial system would therefore be desirable at The Asahi Shimbun. That would include revealing the composition of the reporting team and the names of the writers of each article, particularly for important coverage with a strong element of continuity. By doing so, the company would demonstrate to the outside world that The Asahi Shimbun engages in regular, continuous reporting on those complex and highly specialized issues that can divide national opinion, leading to better communication between the newspaper and its readers.

Most editorials reflect the opinion of writers with their own areas of expertise. No doubt there are instances when it would be appropriate to include the author's name with the editorial to clarify responsibility for how the piece was worded. From that perspective, therefore, the newspaper should probably consider identifying the writers of its editorials whenever possible.

(4) The selection of news sources and relationships with experts

An intense debate continues over the comfort women issue, causing division both within the nation and in international relations. In the midst of this debate, there has been continued criticism in recent years that the coverage of this issue by The Asahi Shimbun is "biased." This Third-Party Committee has taken no side in this debate while carrying out its investigation. However, it is undeniable that these charges of "bias" persist. We would like to address this point by making the following recommendations based on consideration of the ideal form that journalism should take.

As a result of our examination of the newsgathering system at The Asahi Shimbun, we found that there was still a tendency for the newspaper to rely excessively upon a specific and limited set of experts and news sources in its research. This was despite more than 20 years having passed since the first doubts were raised about the Yoshida testimony cited in the newspaper's coverage of the comfort women issue. It is of course up to a newspaper's discretion who to interview for its articles. However, it was striking that in many cases the main sources of information for stories that ran in The Asahi Shimbun were newsgathering networks that individual reporters had developed based on their own personal relationships.

When it comes to covering complex issues where so many different opinions exist even within the academic community, the Third-Party Committee would like The Asahi Shimbun to reconsider the nature of a reporting system that, as we have seen in this instance, depends every time solely upon one-sided information acquired through personal relationships. For example, even if only a limited number of opinions can actually be run on a page, those opinions should be drawn from much more extensive research. It is essential that there be wide-ranging, in-depth investigation and newsgathering activities carried out on a daily basis.

To help enable this, might it be possible for The Asahi Shimbun to create a

mechanism within the company for bringing in experts and specialists with diverse positions and stances, including even those who disagree with its editorial position, and actively convene study groups and forums for the exchange of opinion on a continuing basis? By having their horizons broadened through such a mechanism, the reporters of the News Department, regardless of their years at the newspaper, their job titles, or their assigned sections, would be able to build up experience in writing their articles from a fair and unbiased position.

We would also like to ask that this undertaking be periodically disclosed to the public, and that The Asahi Shimbun not relax in its efforts to create a more open atmosphere within the company.

(5) The nature of management of a newspaper company

A) The responsibilities of the board of directors, the representative directors, the executive editor (director responsible for news editing) and other executives

The board of directors bears responsibility for the management of a company. However, in the matter at hand, it appears that insufficient discussion took place among the members of the board of The Asahi Shimbun. While paying lip service to the separation of management and news editing, management intervened in news-related issues right down to the particulars of the special coverage and whether or not to run the manuscript for the Ikegami column.

Far from working to the company's advantage, this led to a situation that damaged trust in the company. It is indicative of the poor state of communication within the company that various contradictory versions of the facts were presented in the explanations made to this Committee of the circumstances within the company at the time of the incidents in question.

It appears that many of the responses made by the management side reflected the will of the company president, who served on the board as representative director. In fact, it was the Executive Editor (the director responsible for news editing) who had final responsibility on editorial matters, and had that individual refused, the will of the company president would not have prevailed. In the end, however, that individual was unable to resist the company president. It was problematic in the first place that the company's management system was such that the response to a situation of this nature could be decided solely by the company president and the Executive Editor, and that there was little room left for incorporating other opinions. One would naturally expect that the response to a crisis management issue affecting the management of the company would be decided after considerable discussion by the board of directors. However, in this case there is no sign of discussion having been exhausted at the board level. If so, it must be stated here that the board of directors was not performing its duties. All members of the board of directors should make efforts to ensure that discussions and deliberations at board meetings and other meetings become more substantial.

While the company president must bear a heavy responsibility for making the final decision that led to the latest situation, there is also a need for all members of the board to be deeply aware of their own responsibility.

Without waiting upon the recommendations contained in this Committee's report, The Asahi Shimbun recently replaced the company president and reorganized its management. However, those who have now taken on the management of the company as a result of this reorganization should bear in mind that, unless they ponder deeply upon their responsibilities and build a new Asahi Shimbun based upon intense reflection about these events, it will be impossible for the company to make a new beginning.

B) Insisting upon the separation between management and news editing

It must be stated that the primary cause of many of the problems that occurred this time lay in the fact that management intervened excessively in news editing, resulting in articles that were not written for the readers but for the defense of The Asahi Shimbun Co. itself. As authority to edit the newspaper ultimately resides in management as well, it is not out of the question for management to intervene in the reporting of the News Department. However, that intervention should be minimum and limited.

In this case, the individuals with decision-making authority on both the management and editorial sides were all veteran newspaper reporters. There is a possibility that, together with sharing the same way of thinking, they were also subject to similar preconceptions. If so, it would appear that in cases where management does intervene in the editorial side, there is a strong necessity for management to listen to third-party opinions. The newspaper should consider establishing a permanent third-party body composed of members who are not former newspaper reporters to determine whether and to what extent company management may interfere with news coverage in the case of emergency situations calling for management intervention.

(6) On the establishment of the Third-Party Committee

When the Third-Party Committee charged with preparing this report was established, the previous president of The Asahi Shimbun told the members of the Committee that he wanted them to hold unfettered discussions without preconditions, and to extract key points of concern and make related recommendations.

In accordance with this intent, the Committee carried out its investigation and held repeated, earnest discussions to arrive at the recommendations included herein.

However, without waiting upon the issuance of this report, the company president resigned and the company's executives were reorganized. Considering the environment inside and outside the company at the time, this was perhaps unavoidable. However, together with the subsequent establishment of a new organization incorporating four outside experts called The Committee for Restoration of Trust and Resuscitation, the measures taken by The Asahi Shimbun have made its response to the recent problems more difficult to understand.

We hope that The Asahi Shimbun will think deeply about the role of this Committee and the position of its report in the future development and reform of The Asahi Shimbun's internal systems, and that it will put these recommendations into place to

the greatest degree possible.

Further, this Committee requests that The Asahi Shimbun shall, some months after the presentation of this report, provide an opportunity to examine the subsequent measures it has taken.

(7) A cautionary note on the establishment of third-party committees
within an organ of public opinion

The freedom of the press is singularly important among the various forms of expression guaranteed under Article 21 of the Japanese Constitution. In light of this, entrusting the evaluation of the way a particular newspaper company carries out its activities to a party from outside the mass media cannot necessarily be considered an ideal approach.

Fully cognizant of the above, this Committee nonetheless has presumed to point out to The Asahi Shimbun a broad range of issues as seen from outside the company. Going forward, we hope that this report will contribute to The Asahi Shimbun overcoming the various missteps and incidents that have occurred recently to regain the trust of its readers and establish a structure that can once again support free and unfettered journalistic activities.

We hope that The Asahi Shimbun's reporters will not shrink back from the exercise of a free press, but hold sufficient self-awareness about their social responsibility in order to become the driving force for promoting sound journalistic activities in Japan.

(8) In closing

Resultant to our examination of The Asahi Shimbun's coverage of the comfort women issue, this Committee has pointed out various problems with The Asahi Shimbun as described above. We hope that The Asahi Shimbun's management and the company as a whole will work as one to seriously consider the future shape of the company.

At the same time, however, this Third-Party Committee's investigative hearings and the associated documentation have redoubled our awareness that the employees of The Asahi Shimbun and the company's sales agents have been subject to malicious threats and harassment, and have been placed in an exceedingly difficult position. The Asahi Shimbun experienced an attack on one of its bureaus and an attempted bombing at another bureau in 1987 and 1988; in light of this history, we can understand the tense state of mind of its senior management.

Together with harboring a deep sense of crisis about such attacks on an organ of public opinion, this Third-Party Committee would like to reiterate the fact that despicable acts such as these risk leading to the destruction of democracy in Japan.

15. Opinions Individual Members

(1) Committee member Okamoto

Do not put too much “angle” on an article

The Asahi Shimbun responded in extremely good faith to our investigation. The Asahi excels in its ability to execute a task and the efficiency with which it does so once the rails have already been laid in a new direction. However, when there are no rails in place, the company will continue to offer up self-justifications no matter what advice it receives. That conservatism is also without parallel.

The Asahi Shimbun’s responsibility for having continued to use the testimony of Seiji Yoshida is heavy indeed. However, another article that had the same powerful impact internationally was the sensational article titled *Ianjo gun kanyo shimesu shiryō* (Comfort stations: Documents showing military involvement) that ran at the top of the front page with six sub-headings in the newspaper’s January 11, 1992 edition. This coverage, which impacted on the Japan-South Korea summit held just a few days later, invited a broadside of anti-Japanese criticism from the South Korean side (for the specific problems with the article in question, I invite you to read this Committee’s report).

I have heard the phrase “put an angle on” a story from multiple Asahi Shimbun employees, including at the hearings of this Committee. Or, as one employee said, “It’s not a story if you just transmit facts. At The Asahi Shimbun, we first give a story a direction, and only then is it assigned a headline.” I was surprised by the perception that an article is not an article if it only reports the facts.

As a result, events are reported by The Asahi Shimbun with an “angle” imposed to align the story with the newspaper’s overall orientation. This is not true just of the comfort women issue. It applies to nuclear power, defense, the U.S.-Japan security treaty, the right of collective self-defense, the protection of state secrets, tax hikes, and more.

In order to make a story match the newspaper’s orientation, The Asahi Shimbun also picks and chooses among the facts (as seen, for example, in the newspaper’s coverage of the testimony by Masao Yoshida on the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster). It will also play up a totally insignificant matter to make it sound like a major issue. (To cite one example that I remember in detail because it happened on my watch: In the past, when Self-Defense Force [SDF] vessels were dispatched to the Indian Ocean, technicians from the shipbuilders that had built them would travel to make pre-contracted repairs when the ships entered port overseas. There was absolutely nothing out of the ordinary about this. However, The Asahi Shimbun took this information, ran it at the top of its front page under a blaring headline declaring, *Haken jieitai kan shuri ni minkanjin* (Civilians repair dispatched SDF ships) and reported, “This is the first postwar case of the government requiring civilian cooperation with SDF engaged in supporting military operations.” Needless to say, the reader flinches at this.

I have no intention of telling The Asahi Shimbun to be non-partisan. However, unfounded articles and behavior that is tantamount *to* creating smoke where there is no fire should not be tolerated.

It is hard to enter The Asahi Shimbun as reporters. Do those elite employees not perhaps get a little self-righteous? Are they maybe too convinced that they themselves decide the value and meaning of events? I will not go on any longer about this here, but there have been many other Asahi articles that did not accurately convey the facts of the matter, having been given too strong an “angle.” I would like the newspaper to think deeply about this as it makes a new beginning. A newspaper company is not a campaign organization.

However, there is one more important matter to note here.

So long as it is accurate, the existence of news coverage conveying multiple points of view makes democracy strong.

The demise of The Asahi Shimbun would not be to the benefit of anyone. For The Asahi Shimbun to retreat would lead to the retreat of all newspapers.

(2) Committee member Kitaoka

The responsibility of journalism in the present age

The origins of the current problems with The Asahi Shimbun’s coverage of the military comfort women issue lie in a slipshod grasp of the facts.

One can tell just by reading the Yoshida testimony that there is something suspicious about it. Regarding the conflation of military comfort women and the Volunteer Corps, it had already been made clear in the books of Kakou Senda that the concepts behind the two were different. The advance payments made and other associated costs were also completely different, and confusing the two was a mistake that no one should have made. The Asahi Shimbun bears a heavy responsibility for having committed such elementary errors, and for leaving them uncorrected for so long.

A similar case is The Asahi Shimbun’s coverage of the so-called “contest to kill 100 people,” (in which two Japanese soldiers in China in 1937 allegedly held a contest to see who could behead 100 prisoners the fastest). Can soldiers in wartime really go off and act on their own like that? Is it really a contest without a referee? Given even the slightest thought, this was clearly a suspicious story. Yet it was simply reported that way, and it was widely believed.

The second problem is excessive campaigning by the newspaper. A newspaper should not be prevented from arguing in favor of what it believes to be correct. We should give The Asahi Shimbun some credit for having raised the issue of the military comfort women and for bringing it to the attention of the public.

However, this is a question of degree. When Chinese Vice Premier Lin Biao was deposed in September 1971, The Asahi Shimbun was alone among world media in continuing to report that he was still in power. Half a year later, the newspaper

admitted that it had known at the time that Lin had been purged, but that it chose not to report that news because it would have damaged Japan-China relations. One can detect that same self-righteousness and arrogance in this most recent special coverage on the military comfort women issue.

The third point I would like to make is The Asahi Shimbun's tendency to address issues solely within the paradigm of "the government versus the people."

Keeping watch on power is the mass media's most important role. However, it is not true that it is always better for the authorities to be constrained. If you bind the authorities hand and foot, there is a danger they will not be able to respond adequately in a crisis. Similarly, there are times when excessive criticism of the government can benefit opposing nations and bring harm down upon the citizenry. Simply criticizing power for criticism's sake is a problem in itself.

The fourth point I would like to make is the excessive pursuit of justice.

In the case of the military comfort women issue, The Asahi Shimbun emphasized "siding with the victims." This is an extremely important aspect of the current problem.

But, it is not enough to simply side with the victims and call for the achievement of perfect justice. The majority of the Japanese public alive today were born after the end of the war and they should not be expected to bear direct responsibility for this issue. Excessive criticism of Japan will only invite a backlash from them. At the same time, that kind of rhetoric has raised expectations in South Korea, with the result that the president of South Korea embarked on a range of unprecedented actions, including denouncing Japan directly to world leaders. That caused an even stronger backlash in certain quarters within Japan, and prompted the spread of anti-Korean arguments and speech. Both the rise of this kind of intolerant nationalism within Japan, and the complications in achieving reconciliation between Japan and South Korea are—to use the Confucian way of criticism—developments "brought on" by The Asahi Shimbun's comfort women coverage.

Just as in the past the demands for harsh German reparations under the Treaty of Versailles fueled the rise of the Nazis, an excessive pursuit of justice can in some instances prove dangerous. What is needed is a balanced approach that, together with seeking justice, also takes into account the reconciliation of historical understanding between Japan and South Korea.

Fifthly, it is essential to offer practical solutions.

The negative attitude initially taken toward the Asian Women's Fund was regrettable. Under the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea the issue of individual reparations has already been settled. As regards any subsequent individual reparations, the position of the Japanese government has long been that it is up to the South Korean government to respond.

In order to incorporate both this official government position and a humanitarian perspective, the Japanese government addressed the issue of reparations for comfort

women in the form of the joint private-public undertaking that was the Asian Women's Fund. It in effect took a "public responsibility" short of full "state responsibility."

"Public responsibility" is not necessarily a bad approach. The agreements on compensation for wartime forced labor by Siemens AG and other German companies take this form. Rejecting the Asian Women's Fund only encouraged the hard-line factions in South Korea and made it even harder to reach a compromise.

It should also be noted that there are some doubts as to whether reparations by the state are an ideal solution. If everything is made the responsibility of the state, might that not result in overlooking the responsibility of the brokers and others who engaged in illegal acts and made illicit profits back at that time?

My sixth point is the switching of arguments.

In its coverage on August 5, 2014, The Asahi Shimbun stated that, while there was no evidence for the forcible taking away of comfort women, the essence of the problem was that comfort women had been subjected to coercion, and that these women had suffered terribly. I am in full agreement with this.

However, when, at the time of the first Abe administration, Prime Minister Abe indicated his opinion that there had been no forcible taking away of comfort women, was it not The Asahi Shimbun itself that most harshly condemned him for saying this? How are the current position of The Asahi Shimbun, the position publicly articulated by Prime Minister Abe in his official capacity as prime minister, and the position of upholding the Kono statement in any way different?

These kinds of evasions and switching of arguments by The Asahi Shimbun are not rare.

For example, regarding Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, the majority of those advocating revision are people who support the first paragraph of Article 9 on the renunciation of war but believe that the second paragraph on not maintaining "war potential" should be revised. The Asahi Shimbun, however, has repeatedly labeled all of them as people trying to revise Article 9's renunciation of war. The newspaper has exaggerated the call for revising paragraph 2 of Article 9 into a call for revising the entirety of Article 9. In short, there is a tendency to twist and denigrate the statements of others to support its own position.

The national security policies of the Abe Cabinet have also been branded as designed to enable Japan to wage war anywhere in the world. Yet in Japan, where the value of human life is held in extremely high regard, while the state of the national finances is extremely poor, a national leader who likes to wage war is hardly likely. This, too, is an example of the newspaper distorting the position of others.

Not only are these techniques an inappropriate way to engage in debate, do they not also have the effect of dividing national opinion and obstructing the way to achieving a middle-of-the-road consensus?

The various shortcomings noted above are not unique to The Asahi Shimbun, and the points I have made here may be somewhat severe.

Yet newspaper reporters are a privileged group. With just a single business card they can meet anyone they please, and can broadcast their own message to the world through newspapers with circulations counted in the millions. And on top of that, they're well paid.

This privileged cohort is necessary for freedom of speech. However, with privilege also comes responsibility. I ask that the reporters of The Asahi Shimbun practice rigorous self-discipline to constantly check the articles that they write.

(3) Committee member Tahara

Worrisome characteristics of The Asahi Shimbun

Regarding the August 5, 2014 special coverage, The Asahi Shimbun retracted articles related to the Yoshida testimony on the grounds that Seiji Yoshida's testimony was fabricated, but it did not apologize to its readers. Rather than showing the attitude one might expect from the perpetrator who delivered incorrect information to its readers and questioning its own responsibility in the affair, the newspaper instead handled the special coverage article almost as if it was The Asahi Shimbun itself that was the victim deceived by Yoshida's testimony.

Why did it not apologize as the perpetrator who had reported incorrect information?

The reason appears to have been because, as written in this Committee's report, the newspaper judged there was a danger that, by apologizing, it would escalate the forces who were criticizing Asahi Shimbun articles as "fabrications," and who would now start saying that all of the coverage of the comfort women issue had been a fabrication after all. The newspaper also felt there was a danger that it would lose the trust of those readers who did believe in and read the newspaper.

It is noted in this Committee's report that senior management made this decision. However, the actual person who made the decision to remove the text of an apology that had initially been included in the special coverage article was the most senior member of management, the company president.

To take another example, in the case of the Akira Ikegami column as well, it appears that the editor handling the column, the General Editor, and even the General Manager, had judged that there would be no problem with running the column. However—as with the Yoshida testimony issue—the company president made the judgment not to run the column from a "crisis management perspective."

And then the company president resigned before this Third-Party Committee could present its recommendations.

It goes without saying that both the decision not to apologize as the perpetrator responsible for reporting the Yoshida testimony in the August 5 special coverage and the decision not to run the Ikegami column were clearly mistakes. However, the issue

is not just that these decisions made by the most senior member of management were mistaken, but also why, at the same time, the staff of the News Department were unable to point out those mistakes and exhaust every possible argument to oppose them.

Criticism will probably be directed at the company president for having interfered in an editorial issue. However, I believe that the problematic characteristic of The Asahi Shimbun was precisely this inability of the News Department staff to—if you’ll pardon the expression—talk back to the most senior member of management as if their lives depended on it. I feel strongly that it will not be possible to reform this characteristic of the newspaper simply through the resignation of that most senior member of management.

(4) Committee member Hatano

Put things in perspective!

One thing that can be pointed out after looking back over The Asahi Shimbun’s coverage of the comfort women issue is that many of the articles in that coverage were positioned as part of a “campaign” to push for the resolution of the “postwar reparations” issue—and, ultimately, the realization of governmental reparations—defined as helping individual victims who had been overlooked by legal redress. A reporter who was there at the time said that he had a real sense that “[the issue] was beginning to gain traction as a theme that had been forgotten and been left unaddressed by Japan’s postwar reparations.”

When the comfort women issue emerged, the earlier focus on the “forcible taking away” of requisitioned laborers on the Korean peninsula resulted in the issue being reframed in terms of the presence, absence, or degree of “coercion” at the time of recruitment, and that approach has continued to this day.

In that context, the appearance of Seiji Yoshida as an individual who claimed to have himself forcibly taken women away was precious to The Asahi Shimbun, and his existence must have been something the newspaper could not easily relinquish. There was a tendency that, the more The Asahi Shimbun’s coverage of postwar reparations pushed for a resolution, the deeper it fell into the binary formulation of “perpetrators” and “victims.”

Certainly this formulation is important when one considers the past relationship between Japan and the rest of Asia. However, there was a conspicuous pattern of seeking out and selecting interviewees who were excessively close to the victims’ point of view and then writing stories based upon those interviews. Hiroko Hashimoto, who headed the steering council of the Asian Women’s Fund, has written that articles in The Asahi Shimbun and other newspapers tended to use the NGOs opposed to the Fund as their sources, and “generated a ‘Fund allergy’ in Japanese public opinion” (from Yasuaki Onuma et. al, *‘Ianfu’ mondai to Ajia Josei Kikin* [The ‘Comfort Women’ Issue and the Asian Women’s Fund]).

Perhaps out of a sense of atonement, there were no editorials or opinion pieces in The Asahi Shimbun that directly criticized the South Korean government’s flip-flopping

on comfort women policies as it was yanked back and forth by the government reparations argument of the comfort women support groups. While there were some muted observations that this was where the reason lay for the problem having become so entangled, the dominant tenor of the newspaper's coverage was a tendency to place all responsibility on Japan for refusing to agree to government reparations.

Another distinctive characteristic of The Asahi Shimbun's coverage was that it was led by a small group of reporters—the so-called “human rights faction.” In particular, the Asahi articles overrating the significance of the Coomaraswamy Report and the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal were written by these reporters. One Asahi reporter identified the problem with these reporters as their tendency to “become one with the campaigners.”

The Asahi Shimbun time and again explains that the essence of the comfort women issue is the human rights and dignity of women. However, it is undeniable that this can give the impression that the newspaper is hiding behind the “essence argument” without ever suggesting any realistic choices for resolving the problem. This steals effort away from delivering abundant information to a diverse readership.

In June of 2014, after a discussion lasting many hours with the Director of the Editorial Board of South Korea's Dong-a Ilbo newspaper, Hirohito Ono, Director of the Asahi Shimbun's Editorial Board, wrote:

I think that one important part of our work should be to try as much as possible to put the conduct of our own country and its government in perspective for our readers. Are there exaggerations in the explanations of our political leaders? Are the policies of our own country truly leading toward solutions?

This is an attitude we should take to heart.

(5) Committee member Hayashi

The Comfort Women Issue and Women's Human Rights

I would like to state my opinions on a subject that was barely touched upon in the discussions of the Third-Party Committee: the relationship between the comfort women issue and the issue of the human rights of women.

As to the reasons why this point was not taken up by the Committee, one may be it reflected the internal male-dominated composition of The Asahi Shimbun's news and editing departments. Consequently, the subject of the human rights of women did not come up as a point of concern, even at the hearings held within The Asahi Shimbun.

The second reason derives from structural problems of the Third-Party Committee itself, one being that I was the only woman among its members. Moreover, there was an absence of experts on the subject of women's rights.

From the interviews with experts outside Japan carried out by The Asahi Shimbun's newsgathering network at the direction of the Third-Party Committee for the purposes of this investigation, and from my own examination of articles on the comfort women

issue in 15 foreign newspapers, it is evident that international society is trying to position the comfort women issue in the context of humanitarianism, particularly for the sake of women's rights. The diversity of the nationalities, backgrounds, and occupations of the news sources appearing in overseas coverage of the issue is striking. In contrast, the domestic debate on the subject in Japan in recent years primarily addresses the theme of comfort women as a question of international relations and "national interest," be it as a "diplomatic issue" between Japan and South Korea or between Japan and the United States, or as being "damaging to Japan's image." The gap between the debate in Japan and overseas is once again clear.

In the August 5, 2014, front-page Asahi Shimbun article titled *Ianfu mondai no honshitsu chokushi wo* (Look squarely at essence of 'comfort women' issue), Nobuyuki Sugiura, the Executive Editor at the time, concluded that "the essence of the issue is that comfort women had ... their dignity as women trampled upon." Yet when we examine the past articles on comfort women issues in The Asahi Shimbun, there is little evidence that the newspaper has shed sufficient light on this matter.

Again, at Committee hearings held within The Asahi Shimbun, I noticed that even the reporters who were investigating comfort women issues generally failed to interview experts from the perspective of women's rights, let alone that of humanitarianism.

Further, we heard from multiple reporters at the paper that they felt that The Asahi Shimbun's approach to covering the comfort women issue in recent years had been passive and half-hearted.

Incidentally, when searching articles that contain the term "comfort women" in the archives, we find that since 2009 the newspaper that accounted for the largest share of articles on the comfort women issue among Japan's four national newspapers has been the Sankei Shimbun.

My impression is that, given this environment, The Asahi Shimbun in the end was unable to break free of the framework of its emphasis on state responsibility and national pride, and only used the rights of women as a last resort to justify its long-standing claim on "coercion as broadly defined." Although the newspaper defines the infringement of human rights as the basis of the comfort women issue, the precise relationship between debates over comfort women and women's rights remain unclear. While the newspaper called human rights the "essence" of the comfort women issue, what relationship exists between this essence and the human rights of women? The Asahi Shimbun did not provide its readers with sufficient information about the fundamental fact that Japanese imperialism was a system predicated upon the marginalization and stripping away of the rights of women and other colonized peoples, nor did it provide its readers with an adequate forum for debate.

My service on the Third-Party Committee has impressed upon me just how complicated, how difficult, and how important it is to resolve the comfort women issue. It is exactly for this reason that we must cultivate an environment within Japanese society where people from all walks of life, regardless of one's gender, nationalities, or expertise, can freely discuss this theme, and broaden the debate. I encourage The Asahi Shimbun to take this recent series of incidents as an opportunity to become the driving force in this endeavor.

(6) Committee member Hosaka

From the perspective of “sex and the military”

The essence of the comfort women issue is “sex and the military.” To make it even simpler, it is “sexually transmitted diseases and the military.” Every country throughout history has been particularly obsessive on this point.

According to the testimony of a high-ranking officer in the old Imperial Army, there were classes on the horrors of sexually transmitted diseases even at the old Army War College, and when educating and training the troops, the officers’ lectures on sexual disease were delivered with particular intensity. If one asks why this should be so, it is because if even 10 percent of the troops in one unit of an army come down with sexually transmitted diseases, then that army has already effectively ceased to be a fighting unit. The ratio of patients will increase by leaps and bounds to 10 percent, 20 percent, 30 percent and more.

Out of this fear of sexually transmitted diseases, the militaries in any country are extremely rigorous in their management of sex. Of course, the way it is managed varies from country to country, and from era to era. The form it took most often in the old Imperial Army was that the paymaster officer and the military doctor were responsible under the command of the unit commander. The establishment of military comfort stations, the recruitment of comfort women, and testing for sexual diseases were all part of a system, and there were many cases where various “secrets” about the process were shared among the triangle of these three individuals. Once information was sealed in at this level, it becomes hard to determine the actual state of that supervision.

The comfort women issue discussed here entailed examination of how the military was involved in the management of the system, whether or not coercion was used in the recruitment of the comfort women themselves, and beyond that, whether or not violence was an intrinsic part of Japan’s colonial policies. However, to speak bluntly, the entire comfort women issue is only one part of this overall framework. It is a classic case of taking a single fact and extrapolating it into the whole—of, in effect, seeking a breakthrough at one point in the line in order to take the entire front. Therefore, I have no intention of concealing the fact that, as a member of this Committee, I have participated in this investigation with an extremely jaded eye.

In its coverage of the comfort women issue during the 1990s—and of course, this was true to some lesser or greater degree not only of The Asahi Shimbun but of every newspaper in Japan—The Asahi Shimbun simply continued to run stories that were all largely cut from the same cloth. Frankly speaking, it is a fact that, compared to other newspapers, The Asahi Shimbun allowed factual errors to go uncorrected and was extremely blinkered in its inadequate approach toward keeping distance between its reporters and the subjects of their reporting.

In my personal opinion, The Asahi Shimbun’s approach toward covering the comfort women issue was more proactive than other newspapers in Japan. It could be said that those other newspapers were able to avoid the stigma of making erroneous reports by

not pursuing the story.

The investigation by this Committee did not examine the general theme of sex and the military in a concrete way, and was limited to reviewing The Asahi Shimbun's coverage during the 1980s and 1990s. The investigation teaches us how Japan's war coverage in the postwar era has focused tenaciously on certain small aspects of the war, and how those have gone on to be incorporated into the larger currents generated by international society.

At the same time, I would like to note here that it was unpleasant to detect in the criticism of The Asahi Shimbun's coverage the breath of historical revisionism.

By thinking about the comfort women issue in a more fundamental and multifaceted way, it should be possible for Japanese society's capacity to reexamine its own history to earn a special place for itself in international society.