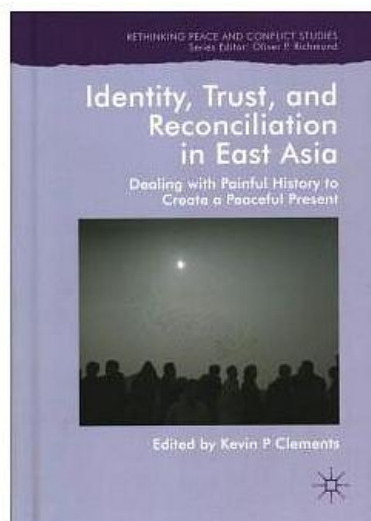


## BOOK REVIEW

**Identity, Trust, and Reconciliation in East Asia:  
Dealing with Painful History to Create a Peaceful Present (2017)**  
by Clements, K. P. (Ed.). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.  
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Siwach Sripokangkul<sup>1</sup>

This book is the endeavor of Kevin Clements, Founder and Director of the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago, who invited proponent academics, policymakers and journalists to three workshops held in Bangkok, Seoul and Yokohama between 2013 and 2015, to write about crucial issues regarding trust, identity, memory, conflict and reconciliation in the Northeast Asia. The region is key because it is the centre of the global economy, with combined population of 1.5 billion people or over one fifth of the world's population. More importantly, China, Korea and Japan have monopolized their own memory about the Second World War and the unresolved deep and painful memories between them. What happens in Northeast Asia, both

economically, socially and politically will have a major impact on the level of prosperity, well-being and political stability for the rest of the globe.

This book consists of twelve chapters. Clements introduces the first chapter and argues that Northeast Asia's painful memories and histories are major impediments to the realization of peaceful relationships in Northeast Asia. Dealing with stereotypes and prejudice, methods to come to terms with this painful history to create a peaceful present and how to develop a de-escalatory dynamic that enables state actors and individuals in the region to think in terms of future-oriented integrative relationships and community building are the book's major objectives. Geun Lee's second chapter, "Identity,

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Threat Perception, and Trust Building in Northeast Asia”, examines the roles that identities play in both hampering and rebuilding trust-relationships in East Asia. Lee developed an analytical framework about imagined identity and threat perception to understand these relationships in China, Japan and Korea. It is argued that Backward Identity Realization (BIR) is a crucial obstacle and these countries should learn to overcome this pessimistic perception. Thus, if each country will be able to address painful memories and can generate an epistemic community to jointly address and deal with BIR, the road to trust-building in the region will be smoother and faster. However, the reviewer thinks the concept of trust in Lee’s view is too simple and does not still see the process or how trust can flow from methods in this chapter.

The third chapter is from Rex Li, entitled “Identity Tensions and China-Japan-Korea Relations: Can Peace be Maintained in North East Asia?” Li focuses on the analysis of the identity dimension of China-Japan and Korea-Japan relations. In particular, the author considers how the national identities of these three actors are defined and constructed, and how their changing identity discourses are linked to their foreign policies and security strategies. Li argues that whether peace can be maintained in North East Asia will to a significant extent depend on how serious the identity tensions among the three nations are and to what extent they may be decreased. To reduce their political tensions, China, Japan and Korea, Li suggests, need to make a serious attempt to escape from their “identity dilemma.” More importantly, they must learn to appreciate the sensitivity of historical memory and accommodate each other’s distinctive national identities and aspirations. Only then will they be able to build mutual trust and develop more positive relationships. The reviewer thinks that this chapter lacks a pathway to escape the “identity dilemma” as well as to strengthen trust and build positive relationships.

The fourth chapter is “Historical Analogy and Demonization of Others: Memories of 1930s Japanese Militarism and Its Contemporary Implications” by Chung-in Moon and Seung-won Suh, which discusses contending hegemony over memory. On the one hand, dating back to the Second World War both Japan and China have their own memory of the 1930s, while both countries continually criticize and demonize each other’s memory. For example, China perceives Japan as militaristic and eager to expand its territory, and are skeptical of a change in Japanese posture because of the many visits by Japanese Prime Ministers to the Yasukuni Shrine. Surely, the reviewer agrees that both countries are still applying “chosen memories” and “chosen amnesia” to sustain their national interests. Linus Hagstrom’s chapter, the fifth in Kevin Clements’ volume, “The “Abnormal” State: Identity, Norm/Exception and Japan,” applies Michel Foucault’s concept of “abnormality” to investigate the social construction of Japan’s abnormality. Hagstrom argues that the reproduction of the abnormality-normalization nexus must be understood as an identity discourse, which produces: (1) Japan as an other in the international system; (2) the Japanese Self as an Other-at the same time illegitimately “abnormal” and legitimately “exceptional”; and (3) Japanese Othering both of its own alleged “abnormality” and of China/Asia, as a way to secure a more “normal” Japanese Self. Hagstrom questions how Japanese foreign and security policy has been understood in the past and how it is projected in the present. At the same time, both China and North Korea are often represented as dangerously “abnormal.” The securitization of China and North Korea as threats on such terms underscores Japan’s own “abnormality” and “weakness,” but it also becomes a powerful argument to further “normalize” Japanese foreign and security policy through exceptional decision.

The sixth chapter from Ajin Choi and Jihwan Hwang, "Basic Human Needs: Identity and Intractable Conflict" concentrates on the Korean conflict toward China and Japan. They also focused on the impacts of ideational variables such as perceptions, experiences and emotions to show Korea's intractable conflict with the two neighboring countries. The authors argued that Koreans have developed a complex identity based on historical experience, they have become extremely proud of themselves and their achievements. Koreans have an unfavorable perception towards these two neighbors. In the case of Japan, Koreans have expressed the least favorability towards Japan among their neighbors; and recent territorial and historical issues are severely aggravating negative feelings. In the case of China, Koreans do not trust China on security issues related to the Korean Peninsula or related to international leadership. The seventh chapter is "Historical Memory and Northeast Asian Regional Politics: from a Chinese Perspective" by Xiaoming Zhang. The author stressed that countries in Northeast Asia are very closely linked through geographic proximity, economic complementarity, interdependence and cultural ties. However, the mistrust among these countries has been so deep and long-lasting, especially political mistrust, military conflicts, bilateral alliances and balance of power politics. Also other factors are the North Korean nuclear issue, and territorial disputes between China and Japan and between South Korea and Japan. The author argued that in the context of China's rise, power politics (such as the strengthening of United States-led military alliances in the region) have definitely played a critical role in Northeast Asian regional politics.

The eighth chapter by Masaru Tamamoto, entitled "Towards True Independence: Abe Shinzo's Nationalism." The author stated that at the heart of Abe's nationalism is the passion to restore

sovereignty to Japan. Abe abhors the post-war agreement for its lack of "true independence." Still, Abe sees the post-war constitution as the ultimate symbol of victor's justice, as punishment for Japan's wartime transgression, and he is incapable of letting that be and moving on. In this way, what is essentially a Japanese domestic debate on the constitution and national identity acquires the element of competitive nationalism between Japan and China, leading to sour relations between Tokyo and Beijing and warnings about a possible military conflict over disputed islets in the East China Sea. The ninth chapter is "History, Politics, and Identity in Japan" by Koichi Nakano. The author is interested in contested memory over "Yasukuni view of history" in Japan society. Nakano argues that Japan's ruling elites have made many genuine political efforts to try and resolve the unresolved "history" issues with China and South Korea since 1990s. Surely, these continues to be one of the major causes of tension between Japan and neighbors. The tenth chapter entitled "Trust and Trust-Building in Northeast Asia: The Need for Empathy for Japan-ROK-China Security Cooperation-A Japanese Security Perspective" by Yamaguchi Noboru and Sano Shutaro. The authors explored the critical issues surrounding Japan-the Republic of Korea (ROK)-China cooperation from Japan's security perspective by focusing on Japan's basic position in building trust in Northeast Asia. Also, the authors suggest that a lack of trust and insufficient attention to intentional trust building between all three countries are crucial obstacles in security cooperation.

The eleventh chapter is "Japan's Article 9 in the East Asian Peace" by Stein Tonnesson. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution renounces forever Japan's sovereign right to go to war and use force as a means of settling international disputes and furthermore forbids Japan from maintaining land, sea and air forces, or other war potential. Tonnesson's argument

is that whether Shinzo Abe insists to amend this Article, all the painful past memories will be back and peaceful relationships within this region will have much problem. The last chapter by Ria Shibata is entitled “Apology and Forgiveness in East Asia.” The author analyzes obstacles to reconciliation and what makes Japan’s apologies unacceptable to victims in East Asia. Also, the author questions that why do China and South Korea continue to express their discontent that Japan’s expression of remorse is not “genuine and sincere”? The author argues that just apology is not enough, if Japan overlooks the components of reconciliation.

All of these various chapters in this book contribute to an understanding of the problems of trust, mutual understanding, contested memories and reconciliation in East Asia. Although these countries have experienced in high economic growth, but if these conflict memories and mutual trust will not be solved. Anyone cannot imagine to perpetual peace in this region.