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# Promoting Japan's Reconciliation: An Australian foreign policy proposal

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## Abstract

This paper argues that the lack of reconciliation between Japan and its neighbours, particularly China and South Korea, is an issue of increasing significance in today's changing geostrategic environment. It asserts that Japan's recent decision to adopt collective self defence in specific circumstances is again highlighting the tensions, steeped in historical mistrust and rivalry, which continue to strain the relations among Northeast Asia states.

The paper considers these questions and contends that Australia has a role to play in assisting Japan to further consider and progress the issue of reconciliation with its neighbours. It does not suggest that Australia's involvement can solve the problem but seeks to show that Australia, as a country with strong economic and security-related ties with Japan, could seek to influence and support Japan in addressing an issue that is impacting the regional stability not only of Northeast Asia but the Asia-Pacific region more broadly.

The paper recommends, as an initial step, an Australian foreign policy proposal that promotes reconciliation. It advocates further consideration of the reconciliation process by exploring the prospects for dialogue and engagement through a range of existing mechanisms and institutions, and proposes the implementation of several policy initiatives to foster this work. It concludes that while the goal of reconciliation can only be achieved if Japan agrees to commence the discussion, Australia has the potential—as an interested but neutral 'outsider'—to influence Japan to take the important first steps.

# Promoting Japan's Reconciliation: An Australian foreign policy proposal

Despite the fact that World War II ended over fifty years ago, Japan's historical past refuses to fade away quietly. On the contrary, it is becoming an increasingly tangled Gordian knot of emotion and ideology, complicating Japan's diplomatic relations with its neighbours.<sup>1</sup>

Tensions over history are said to have heightened suspicions regarding Japan's military intentions—increasing the risk of military conflict and a potentially destabilizing regional arms race—inflamed nationalist feeling in its East Asian neighbours, and all but wrecked efforts to create a strong network of international institutions in East Asia.<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Japan's Cabinet recently agreed to adopt collective self defence in specific circumstances, substantially altering Japan's pacifist stance, in place since the end of the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> This decision has the potential to change the security landscape of the Asia-Pacific region, and has received significant attention within the international community. Responses have been divided into two opposing views: those who support Japan's intentions to expand its leadership role in the region and contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability; and those who believe the decision is a clear indication that Japan intends to return to its militaristic state evident throughout the Second World War.

Not unexpectedly, those countries of the former view include Japan's ally, the US, and Japan's 'friend', Australia.<sup>4</sup> Those countries who have formed the latter view are Japan's closest neighbours, China and South Korea. Their view is founded on relationships influenced by historical mistrust and rivalry. Specific bilateral tensions between Japan and China, and Japan and South Korea, have been linked to territorial disputes. But more pervasive, and potentially more difficult to deal with, is the issue of history and the common view among Japan's neighbours that Japan has failed to atone for its past.

China's perspective of Japan is that 'Japan cannot seek an expanded regional role and will not be qualified to play a larger role in maintaining peace and stability in the region as long as it cannot satisfy its neighbours on its past'.<sup>5</sup> South Korea's perspective is similar, with the current President, Park Geun-Hye, reportedly refusing to meet with the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe until Japan acknowledges and addresses their historical grievances.<sup>6</sup> Views such as these have again raised concerns about the state of reconciliation between these countries, where historical enmity remains largely unresolved.

The issue of reconciliation between states is a complex one. There is no single model for success, no fail-safe framework for resolution and no guarantee that a reconciliation process results in everlasting peace.<sup>7</sup> Yet there is broad agreement that reconciliation between previously-warring states, or between previously-warring populations within a state, is a process that engenders trust and builds relationships.<sup>8</sup> There is also broad academic and international agreement that 'potentially valuable elements of a reconciliation process can also be provided by outsiders'.<sup>9</sup>

Australia, as a country with strong ties to Japan, has found a way to reconcile its relationship with Japan, despite its own historical grievances from the Second World War. Although Australia has 'forgiven but not forgotten', the relationship has gone from strength-to-strength since the signing of the 2007 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation.<sup>10</sup> During the Japan-Australia summit in June 2014, both countries agreed to elevate the relationship to a 'special partnership'.<sup>11</sup> The bond between Australia and Japan has developed to the extent that it has been described as 'one of the most mutually beneficial bilateral relationships in global history'.<sup>12</sup>

With strengthening Australia-Japan relations—and acknowledgement from Australia that Japan's Northeast Asian relationships play a significant role in stability and prosperity in the region<sup>13</sup>—could Australia be the 'outsider' to assist in the promotion of the reconciliation process? Should Australia consider what role it can play in supporting Japan to address reconciliation as the underlying contentious issue in its neighbourly relationships? Does Australia need to have a policy that seeks to influence Japan to reconsider its approach to this issue?

This paper considers these questions and contends that Australia does have a role to play in assisting Japan to further consider and progress the issue of reconciliation with its neighbours, specifically China and South Korea. While some argue that this is an issue for Northeast Asia and that 'outsiders' may have limited influence, the academic work that studies reconciliation processes supports a role for third parties and the international community. Further, the relationship between Japan and Australia is strong, with many ties that bind these two countries, from the prime-ministerial level down. It is argued in this paper that Australia could and should take the opportunity to develop an effective and credible policy to promote reconciliation.

To support this position, Part 1 will first broadly outline the history of Japan's reconciliation issues, including the role its neighbours have played in the increasing tensions between these Northeast Asian neighbours. Part 2 will provide the context for a policy solution by briefly considering the changing geostrategic environment, Australia's national interests, and the advantages that Australia brings as a 'middle power' with a strong relationship with Japan to addressing the reconciliation problem. Part 3 provides a broad consideration of the concept of reconciliation, outlining those factors that contribute to successful reconciliation in order to inform Australia's policy position, before outlining a proposed policy for Australia and recommending a number of policy initiatives.

It is important to note that the issue of reconciliation is a complex one, with many factors contributing to the reasons why this issue has not been successfully resolved to date. This paper does not contend that Australia's involvement can solve the problem but seeks to show that Australia, as a country with strong ties with Japan, could seek to influence and support Japan in addressing an issue that has become increasingly significant within the context of a changing geostrategic environment.

The paper considers these issues from an Australian Government perspective and is focused on providing a foreign policy proposal, that is, 'that dimension of public policy that deals with the outside world [and whose] ... job it is to create an international environment conducive to the nation's interests'.<sup>14</sup> The paper recommends, as an initial step, an Australian foreign policy proposal that promotes reconciliation, supporting further consideration of the reconciliation process by exploring the prospects for dialogue and engagement through the enhancement of existing mechanisms and institutions. It proposes the implementation of several policy initiatives to foster this work. However, this is not a short-term issue for Australia's foreign policy makers, and Australia must be prepared for a medium- to long-term approach to progress this important issue.

## **Part 1 – The Problem: Resisting reconciliation**

The development of a policy for Australia to play a role as an outsider in promoting the reconciliation process must be based on an understanding of the issues involved in reconciliation. In order to determine a credible policy approach for Australia, it is important to understand the causes and how it impacts the Australian community, before offering a practical and implementable policy solution.<sup>15</sup>

The issue of reconciliation between Japan and its neighbours is a subject of significant scholarly examination and debate, with many books, journal articles and on-line comments published.<sup>16</sup> Critically, the lack of successful reconciliation and the underlying causes continue to be an issue of increasing significance, frequently discussed on the global international relations stage.<sup>17</sup> This part of the paper does not intend to provide a deep analysis of Japan's reconciliation processes (or lack thereof) but simply aims to broadly outline the problem, its causes and the current context, thereby demonstrating its increasing relevance to the global community.

### **The problem and its causes**

A number of complex factors and dynamics have contributed to the reconciliation issue but, at a broad level, these factors can be grouped into three areas: history, apologies and revisionist behaviour. All three areas overlap and intertwine with domestic policies, political leadership and the international context to contribute as causal factors that have prevented successful reconciliation.

The history problem has been defined by Caroline Rose as ‘a set of issues relating to the legacy of history and the very different interpretations in China and Japan of the events of 1931-1945’.<sup>18</sup> The South Korean perspective is similar, with South Korea regularly accusing Japan of ‘playing down the extent of the imperial Army’s responsibility for initiating and conducting war’.<sup>19</sup> For both South Korea and China, acts of Japanese aggression that saw the colonisation of South Korea, the Nanjing Massacre, forced labour and sexual slavery, impact on sensitive issues of each country’s national identity, making it a difficult problem to address.<sup>20</sup>

Rose further defines the history problem as encompassing a series of challenges relating to the history content of Japanese school textbooks, revisionist interpretations of the war by Japanese politicians—including visits to the Yasakuni Shrine—and ‘the very different understandings of the events of the war as depicted in war museums and memorials in both countries’.<sup>21</sup> Because of this lack of shared understanding, efforts at reconciliation have not been entirely successful, resulting in broader repercussions for the Northeast Asian region, including the potential to impact on stability.<sup>22</sup>

A 2005 International Crisis Group report on the undercurrents of conflict in Northeast Asia confirmed the continuing presence of the history problem, contending that:

Prime Minister Koizumi’s visits to the Yasakuni Shrine and attempts by right-wing groups to produce revisionist textbooks have prompted alarm in both China and South Korea and added to the emotion with which they accuse Japan of failing to show contrition for its World War II crimes. While Tokyo has offered numerous official apologies and provided billions of dollars of aid to help spur the development of South Korea and China, it has failed to offer direct compensation to individual victims, and, unlike Germany, has shown little interest in continued, critical examination of its history.<sup>23</sup>

It is true that Japan has been apologising in a variety of forms since 1965, and has sought reconciliation with its Asian neighbours since the 1980s.<sup>24</sup> These reconciliation efforts have included apologies, statements of regret, and the establishment of joint history projects with both South Korea and China, among other initiatives.<sup>25</sup> According to Maria Hsia Chang and Takuma Hasegawa, Japan has apologised 39 times, and yet criticism of Japan remains, resulting in a failure to bring amity among these neighbours.<sup>26</sup> However, history has also suggested that these efforts were not sufficiently acknowledged by the recipients, and there was little follow-on ‘robust, concrete action’ by Japan.<sup>27</sup> Thomas Berger notes that:

The net result of Japan’s various efforts to pursue reconciliation, however, have failed to meet expectations. Despite a social and political readiness to adopt a more contrite historical narrative—and despite strong international pressures to do so—Japan’s apologies have been limited in scope, challenged domestically, and singularly unsuccessful in improving Japan’s relations with its Asian neighbours. Instead of resolving the history issue, tensions over Japan’s official narrative have mounted over the years, resulting in a string of major diplomatic crises over historical and related territorial issues at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>28</sup>

The last two years have seen the issue of history become even more prominent, with signs that Japan’s increasing revisionist behaviour under Prime Minister Abe’s government has contributed to ongoing sensitivities. According to a 2014 International Crisis Group report, China began to emphasise historical issues in official correspondence from mid-2013, in response to what it perceives as Prime Minister Abe’s revisionist behaviour.<sup>29</sup>

Abe’s visit to the Yasakuni Shrine in December 2013, his comments on and initiation of a ‘working group’ to review the 1993 apology offered in relation to the ‘comfort women’ by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono (the so-called Kono Statement),<sup>30</sup> and his expressed views associated with the true meaning of ‘aggression’ during wartime have all demonstrated—in the view of its critics—Japan’s inability to accept its past.<sup>31</sup>

China believes that Japan has not sufficiently atoned for its wartime atrocities, its invasion of Chinese territories and its brutality against the Chinese people. South Korea has been outraged in response to this revisionist behaviour and remains vigilant over the need for Japan to apologise and confirm compensation arrangements for the ‘comfort women’. South Korea’s perception, like China’s, is that Japan is trying to revise history and has not appropriately atoned for its war-time past. Significantly, and of direct influence on Australia’s national interests, Berger asserts that:



[W]ith regard to the causes and consequences of tensions over history, the evidence suggests that ... differences in historical views themselves can be a significant determinant of conflict. Although countries do not fight wars directly over history, the tensions generated ... can degrade the quality of interstate relations in ways that make conflict over other issues—such as disputed territorial boundaries—more likely.<sup>32</sup>

### The current context

The problem as it exists today remains connected to history, the sincerity of apologies made, and the revisionist behaviour by certain Japanese politicians. However, while the underlying causes remain the same, tensions are escalating. At a time when Japan is adjusting its security stance and seeking a greater regional role, and a rising China is displaying increasingly assertive behaviour over territorial claims, Japan's resistance to true and lasting reconciliation becomes an unhelpful focal point.

The discussion to date confirms it is indeed a serious issue. Although reconciliation attempts have been made across the years, they have not been sufficient to resolve the underlying tensions. Some might argue that the issue is a matter for Northeast Asia. However, the ramifications impact a broader number of stakeholders because instability between Japan, China and South Korea has global implications, from both security and economic perspectives, compounded by the level of economic interdependence between the three but also with a range of other countries, including Australia. As asserted by Malcolm Cook:

There is a high level of concern associated with the combination of increasingly negative trajectories associated with the relationships between Japan and China and Japan and South Korea, and the impact on regional stability. These concerns and the desire to address them are particularly important for Australia given that China, Japan and South Korea are Australia's largest export markets and major sources of foreign direct investment. Australia has long seen Northeast Asian stability and the American strategic presence in East Asia as vital interests.<sup>33</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that it would be in Australia's interest to promote reconciliation between Japan and its immediate neighbours, aimed at reducing the underlying tensions that could contribute to heightened tensions.

## Part 2 – Australia's Role in Addressing the Problem

With increasing regional instability, and in the context of its own needs for security and economic prosperity, Australia should consider how its foreign policy could influence and assist Japan in addressing the reconciliation issue. This part of the paper aims to provide context for a policy solution, by briefly considering the changing geostrategic environment, Australia's national interests, and the advantages that Australia—as a middle power with a strong relationship with Japan—would bring to addressing the reconciliation problem.

### The changing geostrategic environment

A number of recent high-level Australian policy documents have outlined the significance of Asia's rise and highlighted that 'Asia's extraordinary ascent has already changed the Australian economy, society and strategic environment'.<sup>34</sup> These changing patterns of 'economic power and political influence' are not only affecting the nature of power relationships across the Asia-Pacific region but leading to increasing economic and, in some cases, security interdependencies. Within this environment, there are a number of factors contributing to uncertainty for Australia and other Asia-Pacific countries.<sup>35</sup>

Of significance is the rise of China. Its increasingly-assertive behaviour in several territorial and maritime security disputes, combined with China's military modernisation and perceived lack of transparency, is causing alarm to a number of countries in the region.<sup>36</sup> Japan, for example, feels threatened by China's assertiveness in the East China Sea and over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands territorial dispute, with the potential for military conflict regularly discussed by a number of commentators.<sup>37</sup> The lack of reconciliation between China and Japan underlies the tension over this issue.

The increasing number of influential Asian states, including Japan and South Korea, is also resulting in the 'evolution of a more complex and competitive order'.<sup>38</sup> Within this environment, 'Australia wishes to see a peaceful regional strategic order with deeper understanding, clearer communication and more effective

and reliable rules'.<sup>39</sup> Australia's *2013 Defence White Paper* asserts that Australian Government policy needs to be 'geared towards building security by seizing the opportunities and managing the risks within the Indo-Pacific'.<sup>40</sup>

### Australia's national interests

Australia's core national interests, consistently identified as security, economic prosperity and a desire for a stable and rules-based international system, are served by contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability within this changing geostrategic environment.<sup>41</sup>

In terms of economic interests, Australia focuses on its major trading partners, particularly export partners of which Japan, China and South Korea have been in Australia's top five export markets since 2004.<sup>42</sup> Acknowledging that economic prosperity is tied closely to a stable and secure region, Australia wants to build sustainable security and shape a favourable international environment in order to continue its economic prosperity.<sup>43</sup>

With these goals already articulated in Australian policy, the issue of the lack of reconciliation between Japan and its neighbours—and the fact that this contributes to both mistrust in bilateral relationships, as well as an increased likelihood of conflict over territorial disputes—will continue to be of growing significance to Australia and its desire for regional stability. Further, forging closer, broader and more predictable relations with Japan, China and South Korea has been a strong bipartisan focus of Australian foreign relations.<sup>44</sup> Contributing to progression of the reconciliation issue should benefit Australia's relations with these countries.

Within this construct, Australia's current Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, has described the challenge of Australian foreign and trade policy as 'maximising economic opportunity and minimising strategic risk at a time of transition in the geo-politics of our region'.<sup>45</sup> She has further asserted that to minimise strategic risk, Australia will need to build strong relationships with regional powers, shape strategic behaviour through 'forging consensus', and build regional institutions which value dialogue.

Recognising that countries within the Asia Pacific region are increasingly economically interdependent, the 2013-14 annual report of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade similarly noted that 'the legacies of strategic rivalry and historic animosity'—which continue to exist—have the potential to create strategic surprise.<sup>46</sup> In order to manage the strategic risk and avoid strategic surprise, Australia should consider ways to promote reconciliation as a matter of priority.

### Australia's advantages

Australia's role as a middle power in the region, and its strengthening relationship with Japan, are key to addressing this issue. In the international relations arena, there is no agreed definition of what constitutes a 'middle power', though the term is widely accepted as referring to those states that are not as powerful as great powers but are more powerful than weak or marginal states.<sup>47</sup> Significantly, the use of middle-power diplomacy is seen as non-threatening and it is well established that middle powers, unlike great powers, rarely resort to the use of military force for coercive purposes.<sup>48</sup>

In Australia, the term is associated with a particular form of state behaviour and leadership. According to Andrew Cooper, there are three distinct ways in which middle powers exercise leadership:

First, middle powers may serve as the 'catalysts' which initiate diplomatic proposals. Second, once an initiative has been launched, the middle powers may act as 'facilitators', establishing a program of action and using their soft power to persuade other states to support the initiative. Finally, middle powers may operate as 'managers', overseeing the creation of international institutions.<sup>49</sup>

Australia has long self-identified as a middle power, with a number of foreign ministers and previous prime ministers advocating Australia's ability to use its attributes to be 'a source of diplomatic initiative and energy in the global "marketplace of ideas"'.<sup>50</sup> Australia has used middle-power diplomacy and leadership successfully and has, for example, played a pivotal role in the negotiation of the Antarctic Treaty, APEC, the Cambodian peace process, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Chemical Weapons



Convention and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty'.<sup>51</sup> Several of these initiatives were progressed in cooperation with Japan.

More recently, Australia's involvement in two international incidents involving aircraft—the MH-17 downed aircraft over Ukraine; and the MH-370 missing aircraft in the Indian Ocean—has demonstrated Australia's ability to use its middle-power diplomacy and 'shift opinions and influence events where [Australia's] national interests lie'.<sup>52</sup> Specifically, in the search for MH-370, Australia cooperated closely with Malaysia, Japan, China, South Korea and several other nations to lead the operational search. In the context of these two events, Foreign Minister Bishop remarked in August 2014 that 'Australia had found a new status in world affairs, [and has] ... proved itself capable of shifting global opinions and of influencing events in the national interest'.<sup>53</sup>

That is not to say that Australia has developed an arrogance or desire for intrusion but has specific middle-power characteristics that are often well-received in the international community. It is also important to recognise that when Australia has been successful in its diplomatic endeavours, especially in relation to both the Cambodia peace settlement and the initiation of APEC, it has been in part because of the timing of the initiatives being considered, and also because of the receptive environment in which the outcomes were pursued.<sup>54</sup> Allan Gyngell and Michael Wesley make the point that it is not necessarily that the outcomes were inevitable but that the outcomes hoped for were possible.<sup>55</sup>

These concepts of a 'receptive environment' and 'possible outcomes' are particularly important when considering the success of the Australian Prime Minister's trip to North Asia in April 2015. What it demonstrated was the beginning of an elevation of the Australia-Japan relationship to a 'special partnership', as well as a commitment to improving Australia's strategic relationship with China and South Korea. The visit resulted in the signing of the Korean Australia Free Trade Agreement, the announcement of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement and confirmation that Prime Minister Abbott and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang were determined to sign a China-Australia Free Trade Agreement before the end of 2014.<sup>56</sup> Given the development of these closer ties, it would seem timely also to address the issue of reconciliation.

The strength of the Australia-Japan relationship is reflected in the ability of both countries to work together to achieve regional and global objectives. Furthermore, both countries 'share a common vision, namely creating and maintaining order through multilateral cooperation founded on international rules and norms'.<sup>57</sup> As a result, Australia and Japan are both strong supporters of ASEAN and worked together in the development of APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum, as well as closely cooperating on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues.<sup>58</sup> Both countries are also strong proponents of the UN and the East Asia Summit, and work together to seek reform and improve the effectiveness of these institutions.<sup>59</sup>

In a historical context, the normalisation of the Australia-Japan relationship began in earnest with the signing of a bilateral commerce agreement in 1957, which saw the establishment of a major trading relationship after the war.<sup>60</sup> In his visit to Australia as part of the signing, then Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi expressed regret for Japan's actions and offered 'heartfelt sorrow for what occurred in the war'.<sup>61</sup> So began the reconciliation process between Australia and Japan, which focused for at least the following decade on economic diplomacy.<sup>62</sup>

The 1976 Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation broadened the relationship 'by promoting understanding between the two countries and their peoples and by developing co-operation on matters of mutual interest'.<sup>63</sup> Further political and security cooperation between Australia and Japan commenced in the 1990s and developed rapidly after 1995 with a series of agreements.<sup>64</sup> Most significant was the 2007 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation.<sup>65</sup>

Since the 2007 declaration, and emphasising the significance of the relationship to both countries, Australia and Japan have institutionalised security cooperation by creating a framework based on policy dialogue, developing legal foundations and forming non-partisan support.<sup>66</sup> In 2014, Australia and Japan signed a Free Trade Agreement and established strong links to deepen defence and humanitarian and disaster relief cooperation, as well as peacekeeping and capacity building.<sup>67</sup> Through 2014, Australia has continued to confirm that it is not just strengthening an already strong bilateral relationship but that it is supporting Japan during its time of significant strategic change.<sup>68</sup>

Japan has described Australia as its second most important security partner, after the US. Further, China's increasingly assertive behaviour has 'enhanced Japanese perceptions of Australia's significance as a strategic partner', resulting in a deepening and strengthening of the bilateral relationship.<sup>69</sup> The speech by Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the Australian Parliament in July 2014 demonstrated Japan's commitment to its relationship with Australia, referring to the vow for peace made by Japan at the end of the Second World War, the commitment to never let the horrors of the past century repeat themselves, and providing sincere condolences on behalf of the Japanese people for the Australians who lost their lives in the war.<sup>70</sup>

At the time, some commentary suggested it would be timely for Canberra to use its closer ties with Japan to quietly offer help over the issue of history.<sup>71</sup> Rory Medcalf, for example, contended that 'Australia and Japan should make more of their exceptional record of reconciliation, which Abe's speech rightly and quite graciously dwelt on with his references to Kokoda and Sandakan'.<sup>72</sup>

Australian government policy has recognised that Australia's relationship with Japan is likely to become even closer and more important over the coming decades for the building of sustainable security.<sup>73</sup> Some might argue, in terms of not jeopardising that relationship, that there is no particular imperative for Australia to become involved in trying to promote reconciliation between Japan and its neighbours. However, that line of argument would ignore the reconciliation issue as a source of underlying tension in Northeast Asia.

Compellingly, a previous Australian Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, when he was president of the International Crisis Group, asserted in 2001 that '[t]he whole question of attitudes to reconciliation—and the risks we are prepared to take to advance it—ultimately comes back, for each of us, to the question of what kind of country we want to be'.<sup>74</sup> It will be argued in this article that an examination of the changing geostrategic environment, Australia's national interests, Australia's role in the world as a middle power, and the current strength of Australia's relationship with Japan demonstrates that Australia should be a country that promotes reconciliation.

### **Part 3 – Australia's Foreign Policy Proposal: Promoting Japan's reconciliation**

Having established that the issue of Japan's reconciliation directly affects Australia's national interests, and that there are advantages in having Australia play a role to progress the issue, this part of the paper outlines a proposed policy for Australia, together with a number of policy initiatives. The implications and resources associated with each of the policy initiatives are provided, as well as a final assessment of whether the proposal would be successful. First, though, the concept of reconciliation is broadly considered, outlining the factors that are likely to contribute to successful reconciliation.

#### **Reconciliation and long-term peace and stability**

In order to inform the development of a credible Australian policy response to promote reconciliation, it is worth further examining the concept of reconciliation, specifically the research that addresses the factors that support reconciliation. The research on the subject is vast. However, given that the focus of this paper is not to develop a reconciliation policy for Japan to implement but rather to develop a policy for Australia to influence Japan to reconsider this issue, this brief section focuses on two academics who offer insight on particular dimensions that might assist reconciliation, rather than steps within a reconciliation process.

Lily Gardner-Feldman, with a background in Germany's reconciliation processes, defines reconciliation as 'the process of building long-term peace and cooperation between former enemies through bilateral institutions and relationships across governments and societies'.<sup>75</sup> Further, she advocates that '[r]econciliation involves the development of friendship, trust, empathy and magnanimity'.<sup>76</sup> Gardner-Feldman offers a model of reconciliation as the concept of melding both 'moral imperative with pragmatic interest', together with the art of determining the balance between what should be done and what can be done.<sup>77</sup>

In examining Germany's reconciliation journey against the experience of a number of other countries, Gardner-Feldman identifies four dimensions that have contributed to the relative success of Germany's foreign policy in relation to reconciled bilateral relationships. Considered to be the 'political dynamics of

the process', she asserts that they provide a helpful means by which to consider mechanisms to frame a country's reconciliation process at a foreign policy level.<sup>78</sup>

The first is 'history', which refers to the importance of a living past, and the ability both to discuss differing versions and understandings of history and to enter into a dialogue requiring 'the acceptance of responsibility and a commitment to the pursuit of justice and truth'.<sup>79</sup> Second is the concept of 'institutions', and the development of institutions and the level of institutionalised ties at government and societal level, which provide an opportunity to develop joint interests, and also to engage with third parties.

Third is the dimension of 'leadership'. The leadership variable signifies the importance that visible leadership plays in reconciliation, particularly 'informed political leadership' to 'navigate difficult waters, especially in the inevitable times of crises that punctuate dyads of reconciliation'.<sup>80</sup> Finally, the dimension of 'international context' refers to the larger global setting, relations between reconciling countries with other countries and with regional institutions, and the role of third parties.<sup>81</sup> According to Gardner-Feldman, this dimension confirms that:

[A] robust multi-lateral framework advances the cause of reconciliation by guaranteeing that the parties cannot avoid one another, thereby locking in the relationship and by proffering an environment for the development of joint interests.<sup>82</sup>

Gardner-Feldman contends that the higher the degree to which each of these dimensions is present, the higher the likelihood that reconciliation is progressing. She uses these dimensions to assess Germany's reconciliation processes and confirms her assessment of the importance of 'small initial steps' to 'yield larger steps', and the importance of dialogue and engagement, as well as strong bilateral and regional frameworks.<sup>83</sup>

Along similar lines, an assessment of several case studies on reconciliation, including Japan-China, Japan-South Korea, through to Cambodia and East Timor, was undertaken by Yoichi Funabashi.<sup>84</sup> Funabashi outlines two points regarding how reconciliation should be addressed:

[F]irst, the problem must be tackled not only in moral terms of what should be done but in pragmatic terms of what can be done; and second, that whoever addressed the problem should have a policy-oriented perspective, that is, a clear and feasible policy on how to pursue reconciliation.<sup>85</sup>

The lessons provided by Funabashi are insightful, because they are formed after an examination of a variety of real reconciliation cases. Helpful in the context of Australia and Japan, and thematically similar to the work undertaken by Gardner-Feldman, a number of Funabashi's lessons are particularly significant. The first is that 'our history is everyone's history', which describes the interconnectedness of history and historical views, and the importance of understanding that it is necessary 'to incorporate the view of other countries into any single country's historical record' in order to get as close to the truth as possible.<sup>86</sup>

The second is that 'reconciliation over the past is a process'. This describes the ongoing, long-term process of reconciliation, wherein promoting collaboration over issues of the past is a process, as well as the fact that the process must begin in order to ensure peace and stability. Thirdly, 'the approach should be based on multilateralism and regionalism', referring to the use of institutions to support and encourage cooperation, especially where those institutions are already in existence.

Funabashi also contends that '[a] crucial part of multilateral cooperation is the nurturing of a "culture of dialogue" and a "custom of dialogue"'.<sup>87</sup> Finally, 'political leadership is key', acknowledging that the role of political leaders in the process is paramount, regardless of the vision or process of reconciliation being undertaken. Funabashi, like Gardner-Feldman, also discusses the 'culture of dialogue' and the importance of enhancing dialogue, people-to-people links and working to build 'frameworks for security, democracy and economic development'.<sup>88</sup>

## Australia's role in reconciliation

It is evident that there are a number of dimensions that could be incorporated into a policy of reconciliation, as well as into a policy that seeks to support a reconciliation process. For Australia, consideration of the importance of dialogue, history, leadership, institutions and the international context should underpin a policy position and initiatives. However, in the role of an outsider, Australia's focus should be on dialogue and engagement, the use of existing institutions and relationships to influence change, and how stakeholders in the international context may contribute. Australia's role in supporting Japan should be based on middle-power diplomacy and Australia's strong relationship with Japan, and incorporate, where possible, reconciliation success dimensions into policy initiatives.

### The policy proposal: promote reconciliation

Australia should develop a foreign policy initiative that promotes reconciliation and supports further consideration of a reconciliation process by Japan. As an aspirational goal, Australia would ultimately like to see reconciliation between all three Northeast Asian countries, given the significance of China, South Korea and Japan to Australia's economic and security interests. However, in the short term, the best way for Australia as a middle power to progress this aspirational goal would be to promote reconciliation and 'influence' Japan to progress a reconciliation process. Therefore, the goal of Australia's policy should be to see acknowledgement from Japan that this is an issue to be reconsidered and that action is required.

### General policy principles

Several general policy principles can be established, based on an understanding of the reconciliation problem, Australia's advantages as an 'outsider', and the dimensions that contribute to successful reconciliation. The principles are used to guide specific policy initiatives, discussed later, that should be implemented to progress the reconciliation issue and achieve the goal of the policy. Using Gardner-Feldman's four dimensions of history, institutions, leadership and international context as a framework, and Funabashi's principles of 'what can be done' and 'clear and feasible' policy initiatives as a guide, the following principles are proposed.

### Institutions and leadership

***Australia should make maximum use of dialogue and engagement opportunities.*** Australia's strong relationship with Japan means there are a number of forums and existing mechanisms which provide the opportunity for dialogue and engagement at a variety of government and non-government levels. Dialogue and engagement are the key to successful reconciliation, from the perspective of reconciling parties, but also from the perspective of third-party involvement. Academic debate about Japan's reconciliation foreign policy shows that it is characterised by 'cycles of alternating between silence and contentious arguments'.<sup>89</sup>

Japan's current leadership is displaying aspects associated with a cycle of 'contentious arguments', evident by the revisionist behaviour displayed at times by Prime Minister Abe and other senior Japanese officials. This impacts the way in which Japan is viewed by its Northeast Asian neighbours. Australia could seek to break the Japanese foreign policy cycle associated with this issue by engaging in dialogue with Japan to discuss its significance, such as adding the topic to Australia's policy agenda for discussions.

This principle supports the use of institutions and the role of leadership in supporting reconciliation. As contended by Gardner-Feldman, the development of 'ties at the government and societal level', opportunities to 'develop joint interests, and also to engage with third parties' can be achieved by making maximum use of dialogue and engagement opportunities.<sup>90</sup>

***Australia should seek to influence Japan through the use of 'soft power'.*** While it will be difficult to determine Australia's influence reach on this issue, it is clear that Australia would not seek to influence Japan through the use of hard power or a coercive approach, as it is neither in Australia's interests nor capabilities to do so. Rather, Australia would seek to use aspects of what Joseph Nye describes as 'soft power', that is:

Soft power uses a different type of currency—not force, not money—to engender cooperation. It uses an attraction to shared values, and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values.<sup>91</sup>

Australia has a history of incorporating the consideration of values into foreign policy making as a means of contributing to issues that go beyond responsibilities within borders, and towards responsibilities to people and institutions outside Australia's borders.<sup>92</sup> In this way, Australia would not be seeking to either judge or defend Japan but to influence it by appealing to the achievement of the shared values between Australia and Japan, and by supporting Japan in its foreign policy goals associated with normalisation and an ambition to adopt a greater regional role.

Australia and Japan together have been consistent in public statements that their special relationship is based on 'common values and strategic interests including democracy, human rights, the rule of law, open markets and free trade', and that they intend to work together to 'strengthen regional cooperation on issues that have the potential to undermine the stability of the region'.<sup>93</sup>

The use of soft power at the foreign policy level is also about leadership. The robust personal relationship between Prime Minister Abbott and Prime Minister Abe is evident in the statements released after each of their engagements. Hence, the use of 'soft power' and non-coercive means would hopefully enable free and frank discussions between the two Prime Ministers on this issue. That would support Gardner-Feldman's view of the significance of 'informed political leadership' in a reconciliation process to 'navigate difficult waters, especially in the inevitable times of crises that punctuate dyads of reconciliation'.<sup>94</sup>

## History

***Australia requires a consistent strategic foreign policy message.*** The message should be that Australia wishes to support Japan in a reconciliation process because Japan's resistance to reconciliation is impacting on regional stability. Hence, this issue is important and matters to Australia. The policy should stress the undercurrents associated with regional instability and the concern at which Abe's revisionist approaches are seen by Japan's neighbours.

It should stress that the outcome is also to ensure that Japan's own ambitions for an increased regional leadership role are achieved, including its desire to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Otherwise, every move by Japan to amend its security stance and become what it sees as a more normal country will likely continue to receive negative commentary and backlash, particularly if the lack of trust between Japan and its neighbours is not addressed.

In maintaining a consistent foreign policy message, Australia can also encourage 'the acceptance of responsibility and a commitment to the pursuit of justice and truth' as a significant aspect of the history element of the reconciliation problem.<sup>95</sup> This is in keeping with Gardner-Feldman's dimension of history.

## International context

***Australia must maintain its strong relationship with Japan.*** A decision to promote reconciliation and influence Japan to progress this issue should not hamper the strengthening relationship between Australia and Japan. Japan is significant to Australia for trade and investment, the effect on Australia's broader prosperity, the strong security and defence relations, and the extensive and longstanding people-to-people links. Maintaining these strong links will be key to Australia's continuing influence on Japan.

***Australia must maintain its existing relationships with China and South Korea.*** Australia's policy position must take into account Australia's relationships with Japan, China and South Korea, as well as the complexity of the relationships between them. However, Australia's policy on this issue, particularly in its infancy, should not extend to influencing the likely response from other countries to Japan's initiatives. This is because the initial action to address this issue must come from Japan and it is therefore with Japan that Australia should initially engage.

While it will be important in the medium to long term that China and South Korea are aware that Australia sees this as an important issue, the initial focus should be on influencing, understanding and



supporting Japan. The policy would not be based on pressuring Japan to act, with hard-line consequences if it did not. It should be framed to encourage Japan to address the issue, stressing that this would improve Japan's standing in the global community, as well as among those countries which presently consider that Japan is failing to address the issue.

These two principles link to Gardner-Feldman's dimension of the international context which supports the fact that 'a robust multi-lateral framework advances the reconciliation cause'.<sup>96</sup> This confirms the importance of maintaining bilateral and multilateral relationships.

### Specific policy initiatives

As Funabashi has outlined, achieving 'pragmatic' outcomes of what can be done within a 'clear and feasible policy' is key to establishing a process towards reconciliation. Based on the principles above, three primary short- to medium-term activities could be pursued as a first step to what is likely to be a long-term undertaking. First, it would be important to engage in early dialogue, at a variety of levels, to communicate the policy initiative to promote reconciliation. Given the importance of bilateral and regional institutions to the process of reconciliation, dialogue through existing institutions would be beneficial in influencing Japan.

Second, the extent of dialogue and engagement needs to be widened to take into account the international context and to incorporate other stakeholders who would likely support the initiative, understand its importance and indirectly influence Japan. In the first instance, this should involve the US. Third, it would be beneficial to draw on an Australian-derived, practical understanding of reconciliation, most obviously the example between Australia and Japan in the aftermath of the Second World War. Beyond that, a more detailed examination of history, previous and new academic research on reconciliation, case studies of examples, and the gathering of potential stakeholder views could also be undertaken in order to further understand the extent of the reconciliation problem and its causes, and to inform potential policy solutions. In order to achieve these activities, four specific policy initiatives are presented below.

**Initiative 1. Use a future Australia-Japan conference to consider reconciliation and examine how Australia and Japan could work together to address this issue.**

The first Australia-Japan Conference, held in 2001, was jointly initiated by the Prime Ministers of Japan and Australia.<sup>97</sup> Since then, these conferences have been held every 1-2 years, with Australian participation funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), through the Australia-Japan Foundation.<sup>98</sup>

The concept is a non-government meeting that brings together leaders from a number of fields, including government, business, think-tanks, academia and the media to discuss all aspects of the Australia-Japan relationship, including political and economic cooperation, education, science, the media, the arts and culture.<sup>99</sup> The Australia-Japan relationship, as seen through this institution, can be characterised by 'strength, resilience, diversity and goodwill', and as a partnership which shares fundamental values.<sup>100</sup>

Conference attendees consider an agenda aimed at generating and promoting new ideas and initiatives in support of the Australia-Japan relationship. Recommendations are provided back to the respective Governments and are often incorporated into agendas for high-level government-to-government meetings. For example, at the Fifth Conference held in 2008, both the Australian and Japanese Prime Ministers had called on the Conference to examine and present 'forward looking recommendations for future Australia-Japan relations', as a follow-on to the signing of the 2007 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation.<sup>101</sup>



A number of these recommendations have been progressed—the Strengthening Japanese Language Learning initiative is one example—and have contributed to the deepening of the Australia-Japan relationship.<sup>102</sup> General areas for discussion at the conferences have been in the areas of trade and economy, political and security matters, culture, education and people-to-people links. The Eighth Australia-Japan Conference, for example, held in Tokyo in March 2013, focused on enhancing people-to-people ties to build a fuller partnership, the revitalisation and reform of economies, cooperating for peace and stability, and developing pathways to a closer partnership.<sup>103</sup>

A consistent agenda item of conferences to date has related to cooperation for peace and stability in the region and a desire for Australia and Japan to work together to address security issues. Yet, across eight conferences, the issue of reconciliation has not formally been discussed or considered. Hence, the aim of this initiative would be to request that conference attendees specifically consider the issue of reconciliation as a session topic and present recommendations to their respective government on how Australia and Japan might work together to promote reconciliation.

In preparation for this discussion, it would be useful to establish a bilateral working group, with representatives from government, think-tanks and academia from both Australia and Japan. The group would be guided by specific terms of reference, with the intent of drafting practical recommendations for consideration by the attendees at the next Australia-Japan Conference. The terms of reference would focus on the importance of Japan's reconciliation and the impact on regional peace and stability, and seek recommendations from conference attendees on a way forward.

The inclusion of this issue on the agenda of an upcoming Australia-Japan Conference would seem particularly timely, given the ongoing discussion regarding Japan's review of its stance on self-defence, and that the issue of reconciliation has been raised in diplomatic discussions by both China and South Korea. Also, the proceedings of the Eighth Australia-Japan Conference in 2013 illustrated that participants were more pessimistic about the changing geostrategic environment and the increasing assertiveness being displayed by China in the East China Sea.<sup>104</sup> So addressing the issue of reconciliation, as a means of alleviating regional tensions, seems useful in the interests of all parties.

**Implementation and resourcing.** Implementation of this initiative would be through existing staff and resources within DFAT, in collaboration with the Australia-Japan Foundation, a non-statutory bilateral foundation in DFAT. Given that the conference is held on average every 18 months, funding for future conferences would already be allocated within the Australia-Japan Foundation budget. The establishment of a working group may require additional funding, depending on the location of the individuals who agree to be part of the working group, and the frequency with which the group meets. However, it is anticipated that funding would be considered and allocated from the perspective of 'opportunity cost'. If a decision is made by Government to prioritise this policy initiative, then that is likely to come at a cost trade-off to another policy initiative, either on the subject of reconciliation and therefore drawn from the Australia-Japan Conference budget, or elsewhere within DFAT.

**Initiative 2. Include the topic of reconciliation as an agenda item at the Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations. Facilitate additional high-level mutual visits between Japanese and Australian officials to discuss the issue of reconciliation.**

Australia and Japan already engage at a high level through a variety of mechanisms. The government-to-government meetings are 'without parallel' in the region and include frequent visits and dialogue at the leadership, ministerial and senior official level.<sup>105</sup> The 2007 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, signed between Australia and Japan, established the forum known as the Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations, with the inaugural meeting being held in Tokyo in the same year.

The agenda for discussion has remained relatively unchanged, with the common themes of cooperation on defence, disaster relief and peacekeeping; exchanging information and ideas; and working together on

strategic issues of common interest evident throughout all meetings. More recently, the concept of supporting the US presence in the region, and Australia and Japan working with the US on common issues, has been inserted into the official statements associated with the outcomes of the meetings.

Topics of engagement at high-level visits typically include security, economic and people-to-people elements of the 'special relationship'. Over the years, Australia and Japan have cooperated to promote rules-based regional and global order and have successfully achieved a number of objectives in the areas of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.<sup>106</sup> There are also strong networks between politicians and parliaments which have also contributed to the success of the visit program.<sup>107</sup>

More broadly, a great deal of goodwill and understanding has developed between Australia and Japan, which has sustained the strength of the bilateral relationship.<sup>108</sup> The most recent meeting, the 5<sup>th</sup> Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations, occurred in 2014 and confirmed the vision of the 'special relationship' between the two countries, based on 'common values and interests including democracy, human rights, the rule of law, open markets and free trade'.<sup>109</sup>

At future meetings, Australia should appeal to these common values and interests as a means of encouraging Japan to reconsider the issue of reconciliation. Its inclusion at the next 2+2 meeting would confirm the importance of the issue to Australia, as well as Australia's view that the issue can be addressed. The inaugural 2+2 meeting 'reflected a desire by both countries for even closer security cooperation, and to enhance their joint contribution to regional peace and security'.<sup>110</sup> This concept has remained unchanged and characterises the means by which Australia and Japan work together within the region. The issue of reconciliation as an agenda item would fit well within this construct, as it directly impacts on regional peace and stability. Australia's strategic message should be delivered in this forum with the expectation that meaningful dialogue could be undertaken.

The intent of facilitating additional high-level meetings would be to continue to place the issue of reconciliation on the agenda for Australia-Japan relations at a variety of levels. It is important to intensify the visits in order to consistently engage on this issue, acknowledging that the topic of reconciliation will likely be highly sensitive. Engendering trust and gaining an understanding of opposing perspectives would be important for the initial engagements. It is anticipated that DFAT, in preparing and facilitating the visits, would consider appropriate protocols for initiating such discussions, with the frequency of visits determined by how receptive Japanese officials are to discussing the issue.

Importantly, the bilateral relationship between Australia and Japan is institutionalised and founded on trust. The message should be that this is important to Australia's national interests from a security and economic perspective and that there is no reason for Japan to be concerned about Australia's motives in raising this issue. Although there is likely to be some opposition from the Japanese Government to the inclusion of the topic as an agenda item, Australia would need to be consistent in confirming that it is a topic that Australia is keen to see addressed. The dimensions of dialogue and engagement, facilitated through an institutionalised and strong bilateral relationship between Australia and Japan, support this initiative as an initial policy step towards promoting reconciliation.

**Implementation and resourcing.** Implementation of this initiative would be through DFAT. As the 2+2 meetings are an existing mechanism, there are no specific implementation implications associated with adding a new agenda item to the discussions. The initiative would also be affordable, as it is part of an existing forum. If the initiative was considered successful, and there was a desire from Australia and Japan to increase the number of high-level meetings to further develop and discuss reconciliation, then there may be a requirement for additional resources to be allocated. However, it could be expected that this would be covered within DFAT resources.

**Initiative 3. Work with the US to influence Japan, through adding reconciliation as an agenda item to the US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue.**

The US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue was announced in 2005, as a means of focusing 'growing roles as independent regional and international security players into a more cohesive policy mechanism'.<sup>111</sup> Further, it was seen as a means to move beyond the traditional 'hub and spokes' bilateral relationships formed by the US with countries in the Asia-Pacific after the Second World War. This mini-lateral grouping has facilitated the security dialogue and policy planning of Japan and Australia with their US ally, meeting on five occasions since 2006.

The basis for formation of the dialogue was to act as a catalyst for the development of a more cooperative multilateral security diplomacy; to build on successful episodes of non-traditional security politics; to encourage Japan to pursue its own national security agendas as a 'moderate and self-confident regional power'; and to coordinate the input of allied policy for global security initiatives.<sup>112</sup>

The concept represents a unique approach to alliance politics in the region.<sup>113</sup> Meetings are held at foreign minister level, confirming the importance with which this forum is viewed by all three countries. Meetings frequently occur at the margins of other strategically-significant multilateral forums, and the confirmation of shared values, interests and objectives is evident in the joint statements released in the aftermath of the talks.<sup>114</sup>

For example, the concluding joint statement of the 2008 Trilateral Strategic Dialogue asserted that '[t]he three countries are committed to working together as close strategic partners to help promote stability and security globally, with a particular focus on the Asia-Pacific region'.<sup>115</sup> The 2009 joint statement asserted that '[t]he three countries remain committed to the trilateral process as an effective forum for the promotion of their governments' shared values, ideals, and interests'.<sup>116</sup> In 2013, '[t]he ministers discussed ways in which all three countries could collaborate and contribute to regional stability and sustained economic prosperity'.<sup>117</sup>

Australia placed a priority on strengthening the strategic dialogue on the sidelines of the APEC meeting in Bali in 2013, particularly because of the opportunity provided to exchange views on the current geostrategic environment.<sup>118</sup> Prime Ministers Abbott and Abe publicly confirmed the value of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue in addressing challenges facing the region.<sup>119</sup> All of these statements confirm the strength of the tri-lateral relationship and the intent to collaborate on areas that improve regional stability, thereby supporting the concept that this forum provides an opportunity for Australia, Japan and the US to work together to address the issue of reconciliation.

The potential inclusion of the US to work with Australia and Japan on the reconciliation issue would not only widen the discussions to take account of a more international context but would also provide an opportunity to use an alternative institution to provide a supporting role in contributing to successful reconciliation. Collaboration with the US would also take advantage of the strong relationship between the US and Japan, and could enable the US to address its concerns over the issue of reconciliation and Japan's revisionist behaviour.

Significantly, the US not only publicly expressed concerns at Prime Minister Abe's visits to the Yasakuni Shrine in December 2013, having never previously made public comment about such visits, but has also been concerned at the deteriorating relationship between Japan and South Korea over issues of history.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, it has been suggested that '[t]his has now emerged as the biggest strategic challenge to American interests in Asia', compounding the view that the situation in Northeast Asia does not 'bode well for the future'.<sup>121</sup> The US has, however, confirmed its hope that Japan and its neighbours will find a way to reconcile and improve relations in order to promote cooperation and advance goals of regional peace and stability.<sup>122</sup> The presence of reconciliation on the US diplomatic agenda should mean that the US would be a helpful participant with Australia in influencing Japan.

**Implementation and resources.** Implementation of this initiative would be through DFAT. As the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue has traditionally been held on the sidelines of other strategically-significant events, there are no specific implementation or resourcing implications associated with adding a new agenda item to this forum. The initiative would also be affordable as it is part of an existing multilateral forum where funds would be allocated as part of the preparation required for the forum.

**Initiative 4. Establish specific grants through the Australia-Japan Foundation to further examine the subject of reconciliation and ways in which Australia can support Japan, as well as further researching and developing the case study of Australia-Japan reconciliation.**

The Australia-Japan foundation was established in 1976 with the aim of expanding and developing contact and exchange between Japan and Australia; it is now part of DFAT and helps promote people-to-people links across a range of sectors.<sup>123</sup> The Foundation's strategic objectives are to increase understanding in Japan of shared interests with Australia; increase understanding in Australia of the importance of Japan to Australia as an economic and strategic partner; and increase recognition in Japan of Australian excellence and expertise'.<sup>124</sup>

In 2014, the Australia-Japan Foundation allocated 40 grants which covered studies in a range of topics, including security; regional and international relations; economics and trade; society and culture; education and science; communication, information and advocacy; and the reconstruction initiative to support communities in the Tohoku region to recover from the March 2011 tsunami/earthquake disaster.<sup>125</sup>

Under this initiative, the purview of the Australia-Japan Foundation would be expanded to include the subject of reconciliation as a specific priority area for grant allocation. The goal would be to increase public awareness of and facilitate informed discussion among policy makers and academic opinion-leaders on the successful reconciliation process between Australia and Japan. The aim of these specific grants would be to encourage research in particular areas associated with the subject of reconciliation.

This would involve a deeper examination of the history of Australia-Japan relations and how the Australian community reconciled with and accepted Japan in the aftermath of the Second World War. This reconciliation has been a success story and has seen the Australia-Japan relationship develop substantially in the decades since. Further, a deeper appreciation of the reconciliation dynamics between Japan, China and South Korea would be beneficial in understanding a way to progress and appreciate the complications in addressing the history issue. This is particularly relevant in the current changing geostrategic environment because, as noted by Cook:

For the growing number of countries that have an increasing interest in Northeast Asian stability, understanding these new and enhanced triangular dynamics and how the leaders of China, Japan and South Korea interpret and act upon them is essential.<sup>126</sup>

It is expected that the research conducted via these grants would be made available to inform further policy development on reconciliation. In keeping with the significance of the interconnectedness of history and the importance of understanding history as an element of successful reconciliation, the awarding of these grants would be an investment to more thoroughly understand specific reconciliation issues.

**Implementation and resources.** Implementation of this initiative would be through the Australia-Japan Foundation. It is not anticipated that there would be additional staffing costs to administer an additional two grants through the Foundation. However, it is likely that additional resourcing for the Australia-Japan Foundation would be required in order to establish a grant that specifically focuses on the issues of progressing reconciliation, and a second grant that researches the successful reconciliation path of Australia and Japan. This sum would be approximately \$60,000, based on two grants not exceeding \$30,000.<sup>127</sup>

#### **Assessing the policy proposal: will it work?**

Measuring the success of the policy proposal and the accompanying initiatives is difficult, as the measurement of influence requires observance of the actions of the party which has been influenced. It is recognised that a foreign policy proposal based mostly on dialogue provides an incremental and slow approach to addressing a problem. However, given that the problem of reconciliation has been in

existence for almost 70 years, one of the issues in recent times has been the lack of dialogue on the subject, especially from third parties. Dialogue, even within strong institutionalised forums, takes time and the ability to influence is often dependent on the relationships of the individuals involved.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, it is important to engage in the dialogue with a proposed milestone as a suitable outcome. Such milestones could include a commitment from Japan to acknowledge the past and offer a true apology (acknowledging a great deal of additional dialogue would need to occur to ensure that both China and South Korea were in a position to respond appropriately). Other milestones would be Japanese politicians ceasing all further visits to the Yasakuni Shrine. Others would be an acknowledgement by Japan that previous apologies were well-founded and will continue to be supported; public acknowledgement of the existence of the comfort women and the validity of their claims; and the recommencement of efforts to understand and consider the different interpretations of history.

Further to these milestones, an assessment of the policy initiatives, less dependent on the individuals involved in dialogue, could be undertaken against the guiding principles. As each policy initiative is based on the guiding principles outlined—and incorporates some of the Gardner-Feldman dimensions that contribute to successful reconciliation—it is anticipated that achieving initiatives would be a starting point to assist in overcoming Japan's resistance and in meeting the goal of the proposal, that is, Japan acknowledging and accepting that reconciliation is an issue to be reconsidered and that action is required. An independent assessment of each policy initiative could be undertaken, for example by foreign policy 'think tanks', as a way to assess whether the associated goals had been achieved.

As each of the initiatives has a short- to medium-term approach and uses existing institutions, the implementation requirements and the minimal resources involved would therefore suggest that the proposal and initiatives are 'value for money', should they be deemed successful. Overall, quick wins in this policy arena are likely to be incremental achievements, as this is a long term and often intractable issue. However, if Australia is able to successfully use its middle-power diplomacy to engage with Japan and appeal to Japan's values and ambitions for regional peace and stability, it is possible to achieve the short- to medium-term activities associated with this policy proposal.

## Conclusion

The lack of reconciliation between Japan and its neighbours is an issue of increasing significance in today's changing geostrategic environment and, yet, there appears to be no resolution in sight. As noted by one commentator, '[t]he never-ending accusations and denial have become crystalized to the extent that no-one even hopes to find a breakthrough anymore'.<sup>128</sup>

While the international community remains reluctant to become involved in the issue of Japan's reconciliation with its neighbours, perceiving that it is a matter for Northeast Asia, the mistrust and bilateral tensions remain. As recently as September 2014, at a UN address, the Chinese Foreign Minister made scathing comments about Japan's denial of history, while South Korea's President Park has stated 'if tensions in Northeast Asia remain unresolved, not only will decades of partnerships unravel, we cannot rule out unintended clashes'.<sup>129</sup>

Japan's recent decision to adopt collective self defence in specific circumstances has received significant attention within the international community, again bringing the history which strains the relations among Northeast Asia states onto the international relations agenda. This, combined with the rising power of China, means that Australia cannot ignore the impact these changes will have on our security and economic prosperity. While the ongoing geo-political issues are complex, it is clear that Japan's resistance to true and lasting reconciliation will be a key element of ongoing tensions in the region, particularly with China and South Korea.

However, it has been argued in this paper there is an opportunity here for Australia. As outlined by Gardner-Feldman, '[r]econciliation involves the development of friendship, trust, empathy and magnanimity'.<sup>130</sup> Australia's role as a middle power, improving relationships with China and South Korea, and the elevation of Australia's relationship with Japan to a special partnership provide a 'receptive environment' and signify that outcomes once hoped for now seem possible.<sup>131</sup>

By melding both 'moral imperative with pragmatic interest', Germany demonstrated that reconciliation can be achieved through strong leadership, robust institutions, a commitment to a true recording of history and an understanding of international context.<sup>132</sup> The policy principles and initiatives outlined in this paper aim to take the first step in progressing a similar reconciliation for Japan, China and South Korea. But, with Funabashi's approach in mind, the initiatives also acknowledge that because of its long and protracted history, changes are likely to be slow and incremental.

For Australia, as an outsider, short- to medium-term activities with a focus on pragmatic and achievable outcomes are therefore key to achieving initial success and influencing Japan to progress reconciliation.<sup>133</sup> The focus on dialogue and engagement, and the use of existing bilateral and multilateral institutions, such as the Australia-Japan Conference, the Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations and the US-Australia-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, as a means to place reconciliation on the agenda, is in keeping with Australia's middle-power diplomacy and sharing of common values and interests with Japan.

Australia's aspirational goal of seeing reconciliation between China, South Korea and Japan can only be achieved if Japan agrees to commence the discussion. The role for Australia can and should be the interested but neutral 'outsider' that promotes reconciliation and influences Japan to take the important first steps on this issue.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Yoichi Funabashi (ed.), *Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific*, US Institute of Peace Press: Washington DC, 2003, p. xv.
  - <sup>2</sup> Thomas H. Berger, *War, Guilt and World Politics after World War II*, Cambridge University Press: New York, 2012, p. 123.
  - <sup>3</sup> Collective self-defence is authorised by Article 51 of the UN Charter. If a country in the international system has suffered an armed attack, then any other country has the right, but not the duty, to use armed force against the aggressor in reliance upon the principle of collective self-defence. See Craig Martin, 'Collective Self-Defense and Collective Security: what the differences mean for Japan', *The Japan Times*, available at <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2007/08/30/commentary/world-commentary/collective-self-defense-and-collective-security-what-the-differences-mean-for-japan/#.U8vTevmSxig>> accessed 28 June 2014.
  - <sup>4</sup> See, for example, Nicholas Szechenyi, 'Japan Chair Platform: Japan's Debate over Collective Self-Defense: time to move forward', *Center for Strategic and International Studies* [website], 22 May 2014, available at <<http://csis.org/publication/japan-chair-platform-japans-debate-over-collective-self-defense-time-move-forward-0>> accessed 2 July 2015; and Tony Abbott, 'Joint Statement with Prime Minister Abe – Special Strategic Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', *Prime Minister of Australia* [website], 8 July 2014, available at <<http://www.pm.gov.au/media/2014-07-08/joint-statement-prime-minister-abe-special-strategic-partnership-21st-century>> accessed 1 October 2014.



- <sup>5</sup> Reinhard Drifte, *Japan's Security Relations with China since 1989: from balancing to bandwagoning?*, Routledge: New York, 2003, p. 155.
- <sup>6</sup> See, for example, J. Berkshire-Miller, 'Northeast Asia Diplomacy: a trilateral way forward?', *The Diplomat* [website], 6 October, 2014, available at <<http://thediplomat.com/2014/10/northeast-asia-diplomacy-a-trilateral-way-forward/>> accessed 20 October 2014; and Ida Torres, 'S Korean President Park refuses to meet with Former Japan PM Murayama', *Japan Daily Press*, 12 February 2014, available at <<http://japandailynews.com/s-korean-president-park-refuses-to-meet-with-former-japan-pm-murayama-1244076/>> accessed 14 August 2014.
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