Panel Title: The Political Utility of War Memory: deconstructing the politics-history nexus in post-war Japanese civil society

Panel Abstract
War memory is conventionally positioned in post-war Japanese political science as the locus of antagonism between states. Two narratives dominate: a Japanese state focussed on denial of atrocities that ignores calls to restore accuracy and remorse to postwar Japan’s official renderings of the past; and a denial discourse emanating from within Japan that is taken by outside observers to represent a holistic ‘Japanese’ standpoint, with visibility granted only to those entities that accord with conservative state-led attempts to ‘transcend’ a negative past.

But the inter-penetration of history and political identity requires a more nuanced, deeper exploration of the nexus between politics and war memory. How did memories of war shape political thought and action outside of the state in the post-war era in Japan? How have non-Japanese civil society collectives impacted on Japan’s own civil society’s engagement with the past? And most importantly, how has war memory acquired political relevance and impact in the contemporary era in Japan in non-state spheres? This panel explores these questions, and aspires to provide insights into how history acquires political utility for those outside the state that insist on linking war memory to politics in their own lives.

Chair: Rikki Kersten
Discussant: TBA
Coordinator: Rikki Kersten (X50453; Rikki.Kersten@anu.edu.au)
Equipment: powerpoint projector, screen

Proposed Program Stream:
Politics

Title: Restitution for South Korean Victims of Colonialism and War: the Role of Japan’s Non-State Actors

Lauren Richardson
The Australian National University

Abstract
We live in an era of apology and redress in which nations are called upon to atone for their historical injustices. Indeed, in light of its imperialist past, Japan has come under increasing international pressure in recent decades to apologize and provide restitution to the victims of its colonial and wartime policies. The response by Japan to such pressure has been the topic of a great deal of scholarly inquiry. Yet such inquiries have focused overwhelmingly on how the state in Japan has responded, and accordingly, have been characterized by analyses of the wording of governmental apologies, the political behaviour of Japanese politicians and the logic underscoring the government’s reluctance to provide compensation. It has apparently gone unnoticed to scholars that non-state actors in Japan have responded to the duty of
atonning for Japan’s imperialist past, and have become important agents in the redress process for victims by acting as the advocates and pressuring the Japanese government to provide restitution.

While there has been a burgeoning of literature on the redress movements for the victims of Japan’s colonial and wartime policies in recent years, scholars have been preoccupied with the movements as they have unfolded in the “victim nations” - South Korea and China. We can speculate as to why the activists of the “perpetrator nation” - Japan - have been overlooked in this literature; their activism has largely been conducted “behind the scenes” rather than through protests and at the forefront of litigation battles like their victim advocate counterparts in Korea and China, and has therefore been relatively less conspicuous. Yet despite their lack of visibility, the role of Japan’s activists has been considerable and warrants close inspection.

This study purports to rectify this oversight in the literature by bringing the role of Japan’s citizen activists in the redress process for victims, into sharp relief. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Japan and South Korea, it will examine their advocacy on behalf of South Korean victims of Japan’s colonial and wartime policies. It will inquire into who these Japanese activists are, how they came to advocate for Koreans, the nature of their advocacy strategy and how they have impacted upon the Japanese government at both the local and national levels. In transcending the characteristic state-focused analyses of Japan’s response to issues of restitution for Korean victims, this study will shed new light on the nature of state-citizen relations in Japan and underscore the role of non-state actors in victim redress, more broadly.

**Title: Cold War Modernity and the Transnational Politics of Memory**

**Taeju Kim**  
University of Chicago

**Abstract**  
This paper analyses the content of the emerging Cold War memories of conservative realists, such as Eto Jun, Kosaka Masataka, and others, who became officially recognized public opinion (Seiron) leaders after the 1960 Anti-Security Treaty movement. The realist scholars reformulated Japan’s national interests and identity through memories of their WW II experience, interactively driving Cold War modernization in a way that appropriated American modernity. The conservative realism produced in their imagination uniquely embraced state initiatives of the capitalist model of industrial growth and modernization, and an internationally-created regime of anti-communist liberal order. While interacting with U.S.-led liberal order-making, they responded to the massive violence generated by strained domestic social relations and American wars in Asia, engendering in turn a new debate on civil society. Using the framework of civil society as a structure of modernization, this project argues that the contentious articulations of war memory served as an important means of creating Japan’s new domestic relations, which were founded upon intensified competition in global capitalism.

Given their collaborationist relationship with the state, conservative realists strenuously advocated a broadly shared ideology of capitalist modernization that interactively negated, appropriated, and negotiated with the progressive claims of ‘ideal moralism and neutralism.’ For that reason, they emphasized effective communications, not only among different social groups, but also with the hegemonic other, the U.S., while at the same time producing anti-hegemonic discourses against the U.S., the USSR, and Communist China in their justification of a realist ideology of peace. Faced with rising levels of political violence on both the domestic and the international level during the 1960s, the postwar morality of the conservatives was to construct an economic civil society as an essential part of winning a new total war, that is, the Cold War economic competition, and to create social stability with anti-violence, equality, and sovereign autonomy. The conservative desire for the Japanese nation-state was
embedded into their idealization of Meiji individualism; they considered the nation-state as the ultimate defender and protector of individual interests within the Free World, in conjunction with the global integration of the Cold War economic system.

Upon this premise, this paper identifies a core group of Cold War conservative realist intellectuals as officially recognized public opinion leaders during the Cold War and elaborates their Cold War nation-building narratives. In doing so it contemplates how conservative war memories and post-WW II economic modernization generated distinctive ways of understanding “self” and “other.” This paper posits that the growing civil society movement in the post Cold War era might be a reformulated outcome of a changing concept of the state, which the realists helped to create for the sake of mobilizing the population through their developmental discourses that arose from within their imagination.

Title: Yoshimoto Takaaki’s ‘1945 complex’: historical trauma, apostasy and subjective coherence

Rikki Kersten
Australian National University

Yoshimoto Takaaki (1924 – 2012) was revered in his lifetime as a charismatic, iconoclastic critic and poet whose irreverence and intellectual plasticity inspired postwar youth, particularly in the 1960s, to challenge conventional narratives of postwar Japanese political life. His prickly and devastating critiques of postwar thinkers and the self-images these thinkers projected onto Japan’s postwar identity saw Yoshimoto seethe and rage, inspiring his readers to engage in protest and adopt his lexicon of denigration in their own activist journeys. The intriguing aspect of Yoshimoto’s thought was that he based his cutting edge ideas in postwar, on the very thing that others struggled mightly to transcend: the experience of defeat in 1945.

Why did Yoshimoto Takaaki embrace Japan’s defeat in August 1945 as the unifying theme of his postwar thought? Yoshimoto’s drive to integrate his war-era lived experience with his postwar thought ran counter to the dominant thrust of postwar intellectual life. Instead of adopting the identity of victim of an authoritarian state who was ‘liberated’ by defeat in 1945, Yoshimoto privileged subjective and intellectual coherence over disconnection from an undesirable past. His stance not only challenged the major debates of the day on war guilt, apostasy (tenko) and militarism along with their progressive exponents, but also imposed a transwar temporal frame onto Japan’s postwar political consciousness.

Yoshimoto was famous in postwar Japan for his scathing denunciation of progressive thinkers and of communists, especially those communists who committed apostasy in the 1930s. At the same time, Yoshimoto served as an inspiration to the “new left” movements of the late 1960s. Students who in 1968 constructed barricades and mocked progressive thinkers and “old left” leaders brandished Yoshimoto’s language of derision as they raged against the Establishment. But for Yoshimoto the source of postwar democratic ‘illusions’ sprang from wilful amnesia on the part of postwar public intellectuals about the complicity of the self in Japan’s war.

Through examining Yoshimoto’s own war experience, and his debates with the communist Hanada Kiyoteru and the progressive thinker Maruyama Masao, this paper will elaborate and analyse the assumptions driving Yoshimoto’s apparently discordant identification with war and defeat. We will show how Yoshimoto’s use of spatial and temporal analytical structures enabled
him to mobilise defeat as a metaphor for intellectual engagement and critical detachment. The fact that Yoshimoto ultimately transcended the temporal attachment to 1945, and made defeat the intellectual anchor of his postwar opus, offers us new insights and perspectives on the political thought and life of postwar Japan.