



INSIDE

- US misguided on IP in China > p14
- Abe makes most of DPRK tensions > p15

Tokyo works to distort history

Japan right-wing forces opposed to UNESCO heritage listing of 'comfort women' have the Abe administration's tacit support

By ZHOU YONGSHENG

Civil groups from eight countries, including China, the Republic of Korea and the Philippines, have approached UNESCO to declare "comfort women" — a euphemism for women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army before and during World War II — a tragic heritage of humankind.

But according to Japanese newspaper the *Sankei Shimbun*, Japan's right-wing forces have threatened that Japan's government will stop paying UNESCO membership fees if "comfort women" is included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register next month.

Fourteen civil groups from the eight countries have submitted historical records that the Japanese army forced women into sexual slavery, making it the strongest international civil action to get "comfort women" included on the UNESCO heritage list to pay respects to the victimized women.

Japan has always opposed the inclusion of "comfort women" in the Memory of the World Register. It has even asked UNESCO to revise its review procedure, saying it is unreasonable and unfair.

And Japan's right-wing forces, with the tacit support of their government, are trying to increase the number of Japanese staff in UNESCO, in order to prevent the inclusion of "comfort women" on the heritage list.

When China applied to UNESCO in 2015 for listing the Nanjing Massacre and "comfort women" in its Memory of the World Register, the Japanese government organized a civil delegation to appeal to the UN body that the two incidents are not historical facts. And after the Nanjing Massacre was listed in the register, Japan and some Japanese media outlets said that UNESCO's review procedure was unfair and baseless. Only some Japanese leftists supported the inclusion of "comfort women" on the UNESCO heritage list.

But Japan's government does not

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dare to publicly oppose such moves, because that would expose Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration's evil designs of denying history, especially Japan's sordid war past.

The Abe administration has not only tried every means possible to deny that the Nanjing Massacre was orchestrated by the Japanese army, but also claimed that "comfort women" were actually women who voluntarily chose to "serve" the Japanese forces. And by doing so, the Abe administration has only exposed its current military ambitions.

Some Japanese right-wing scholars, too, are trying to distort history, by claiming that Japan's invasion of Asian countries was aimed at liberating Asian people and fighting against Western colonists.

The Abe administration and Japanese right-wing forces that are trying to deny the country's war past are not only dishonest, but also trying to obstruct the peaceful development of the world today.

They attempt to rewrite history to add legitimacy to Japan's military growth.

But the Japanese government is not likely to officially support the country's right-wing forces' threat to stop contributing to the UNESCO fund if "comfort women" are listed in the Memory of the World Register, because it knows such a move will invite international criticism.

Moreover, if Japan does not pay its membership fees over a long period of time, it could cease to be a member of UNESCO. This is not what the Abe administration wants, because it needs the UN organization to promote Japan's rightist historical views that distort history.

Therefore, the Abe administration may continue to use propaganda and diplomatic pressure to deny or distort Japan's war past, and continue to be a member of UNESCO.

The author is a professor of Japan studies at China Foreign Affairs University.

US, DPRK hold key to peninsula issue

Both sides must work together to peacefully resolve tensions for the long-term stability of the global community

By YAO LU

In his maiden speech at the United Nations General Assembly on Sept 19, US President Donald Trump threatened to "totally destroy" the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) if need be.

In earlier remarks, Trump has called on China and Russia to do more to restore peace on the Korean Peninsula, but he has been adding fuel to the fire by launching frontal attacks on the DPRK leader, as he did at the UN General Assembly.

On Sept 11, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2375 to impose the strictest sanctions on Pyongyang for conducting its sixth and, to date, strongest nuclear test on Sept 3.

But it seems the belligerent attitude of Washington toward Pyongyang prompted the latter to test-fire a missile over Japan into the Pacific Ocean despite the fresh UN sanc-

tions and further escalating tensions in Northeast Asia.

Amid rising global condemnation of the DPRK, the United States has time and again said that China should shoulder most of the responsibility and take "direct action" to resolve the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue.

The DPRK's nuclear tests also challenge China's national security and interests. And China has done more than enough to restore peace in the region, but its efforts have failed because the main disputing parties have ignored its suggestions.

The fact is that only the DPRK and the US can peacefully resolve the peninsula issue, as Pyongyang has decided to develop nuclear weapons to ensure national security and the US, unwittingly or otherwise, has influenced that decision.

The US has of late upgraded its military cooperation with its allies in the Asia-Pacific region, especially the Republic of Korea (ROK); held many large-scale military drills

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with them; and has deployed the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system on ROK soil — moves that perhaps have prompted the DPRK to conduct more nuclear tests and further worsen the situation in the region.

Besides, sanctions and isolation from the international community have dealt a blow to the DPRK's economy, forcing Pyongyang to develop nuclear weapons to bolster its security, thereby creating a vicious circle of more sanctions followed by more nuclear tests.

Surprisingly, though, the rising tensions in the region have benefited the US. For example, using the inflammable situation on the peninsula as an excuse, the US has strengthened its alliances with some Asia-Pacific countries, such as the ROK and Japan, and widened its influence in the region.

Moreover, after the US deployed THAAD in the ROK and urged China to impose sanctions on the

DPRK, China's relations with the two neighbors have suffered.

Beijing has always supported the peaceful denuclearization of the peninsula and made great efforts to make that a reality, as nuclear tests in the neighborhood are detrimental to China's national security.

Beijing has always stood for stability; it has strictly followed the UN Security Council resolutions, and strongly urged the DPRK to halt its nuclear program in exchange for the US and the ROK stopping their large-scale joint military drills.

The key to ultimately resolving the DPRK issue lies with Pyongyang and Washington. For the long-term stability of the international community, the two sides should fulfill their due responsibilities and come to the negotiating table to peacefully resolve their differences.

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