

# Review Essay

## ***Sites of Contestation: What Apology Debates Tell Us about International Relations***

### ***Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics***

Jennifer Lind. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008. 256pp.

### ***Troubled Apologies among Japan, Korea, and the United States***

Alexis Dudden. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. 184pp.

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Some scholars have stated that an “age of apology” began in the 1990s (Brooks 1999: 3)—that apologies now are considered standard and beneficial practice in business, domestic politics, and international affairs. Some praise this trend, seeing it as a sign that a new space has opened up in the post-Cold War world for moral concerns and “national self-reflexivity” (Barkan 2000: xvii).<sup>1</sup> Such scholars and other commentators see a great deal of potential in apology to change relationships for the better.<sup>2</sup> While more discussions public apologies occurred in the 1990s,<sup>3</sup> however, it is unclear what this change means. After all, despite the increase in discussion, official apologies remain

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relatively rare, particularly regarding thorny historical issues (such as the Japanese regarding their imperial period or the United States regarding slavery).

For one, not all view apologies with approval. Indeed, whether the treatment is scholarly or popular, apologies seem to generate as much cynicism as they do hope. While many demands or requests for political apologies emerge, they rarely emerge (Trouillot 2000: 177). Evidence shows that, even when tendered, public apologies often face resistance, rejection, or challenges that they are inadequate—engendering a surprising amount of controversy. This divisiveness only increases when the apologies are at the interstate level (between governments), and relate to “collective historical wrongs” (Milloy 2005: C01).

Nevertheless, the interest in apologies has continued, as evidenced by the increasing number of books on political apologies that have been published (Barkan and Karn 2006; Negash 2006; Gibney et al 2007; Nobles 2008; Smith 2008). Two of the most recent texts of note are these slim volumes by international relations (IR) scholar Jennifer Lind and historian Alexis Dudden, both of which provide detailed analysis of apologies and the political disturbances they generate. Lind and Dudden also have helpful black-and-white photos that provide visual evidence of the extent of regional reaction to various flare-ups. In short, both texts are important, with Dudden’s work besting Lind’s in terms of quality and significance.

Alexis Dudden traces the intricacies and ironies of history in Northeast Asia in a compelling narrative that indicts many governments and political figures in the process, providing essential reading for anyone wishing to learn more about these complex issues. She writes about Japan, Korea, and the United States, and how all three governments are wrestling with “history problems” (Dudden: xi) in various ways in the wake of the Japanese imperialist period. In particular, Dudden covers such conflicts as the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands to the Yasukuni Shrine to No Gun Ri, the disputed series of events during the Korean War. She does an excellent job of cataloguing the particulars of the various situations, which often link together in tit-for-tat rhetoric between governments.

Dudden begins with the Japanese-Korean flashpoint of the Takeshima or Dokdo Islands, a chapter that should be required reading for anyone wishing to understand this troubled conflict. The controversy over these small islands touches upon issues of national identity, sovereignty, remembrance, honor and respect, as well as a host of other

issues, such as the power of naming. Her concise, careful recounting of the different governments' depictions of the Dokdo/Takeshima situation will resonate with anyone who has tried to mediate or facilitate a conflict. Even with individual-level disputes, various parties make selective omissions and elisions that make it a challenge to tell for certain where the "truth" lies. Dudden continues to explore such themes, providing fascinating historical details, throughout the rest of the book.

Meanwhile, Jennifer Lind's *Sorry States: Apologies in International Relations* is both an ambitious if frustrating text. What Lind does well is reviewing in precise detail the evidence available on two of the most prominent cases of international apologies to date, (West) Germany and Japan after World War II.<sup>4</sup> As she reiterates, German leaders and citizens seem to have done a far more effective job of dealing with their collective responsibilities in the aftermath of war than have the Japanese. Her task is to explain why this gap in process and outcomes exists. Lind also provides prudent advice for political leaders about whether apologies and other forms of contrition are useful tools of statecraft. She also makes excellent use of compelling epigraphs at the beginning of every chapter.

Lind is strongest when describing Japanese actions, her area of greatest expertise. She highlights some shocking quotations from political figures as well as the courage of those Japanese figures who have challenged whitewashed notions of the Japanese imperial era. Most disturbing, of course, is the ongoing presence of high-ranking Japanese political figures who even in recent years still subscribe to such ultra-nationalist interpretations of Japan's history overseas. She also notes the frequent problem that beleaguers the attempts of prime ministers to demonstrate regret to neighboring states, as unapologetic statements from members of their own cabinets subsequently undermine them. Similarly, the inability of the Japanese Diet to generate apologetic statements and gestures to nearby countries leads to concerns that many Japanese do not understand the highly negative impact of Japanese imperial policies on others.

Lind also writes at length about the remarkable process of Franco-German reconciliation as her second major case (she cleverly expands these two cases by dissecting them into three periods apiece). She uses this important case to claim that West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's limited conciliatory approach strikes the best

balance between contrition about the past and a positive message about the nation's future (Lind: 197).

Unlike Dudden, meanwhile, Lind wants to use the tools of mainstream social science to test certain hypotheses of transitional justice and post-conflict peacebuilding.

The German and Japanese experiences have led many analysts to argue that international reconciliation requires that countries come to terms with past violence. This view is bolstered by many scholars of transitional justice who argue that *within* states, truth-telling and legal prosecutions for human rights abuses promote democratic consolidation and postconflict stability. Yet international relations scholars so far have not systematically tested the effects of apologies and other acts of contrition. Is it true that they reduce fear and promote reconciliation between states? (Lind: 2; emphasis in original)

This interpretation perhaps is overdrawn, partially because Lind is most interested in what international relations scholars have to say about these processes *across cases* via hypothesis testing. After all, there have been scholars of transitional justice who have pointed out the lack of necessity for truth and reconciliation processes in certain postwar situations, pointing out that, for some societies, amnesia may be a viable alternative (Graybill 2004; Cobban 2007; among others).

Lind is correct that most *well-known* works on apologies, particularly journalistic discussions,<sup>5</sup> generally follow a neoliberal emphasis on human rights and cathartic attempts to process major historical problems by “shining light on dark pasts.” Contrition, by this reasoning, is good for the soul. This normative claim may or may not be correct across space and time, however.

### **THEORETICAL INTERPRETATIONS**

In terms of their approaches, Dudden's theoretical framework is more implicit than explicit, which is intriguing since she generally states her perspective forthrightly. This lack of clarity about overall approach means that one must inspect the author's words and arguments carefully to discern what assumptions are at work.

Dudden's longest discussion of her approach comprises only a couple of paragraphs. She leans heavily on Harry Harootunian's (2000) discussion of “the ruse of

history” and temporal/space element in what Walter Benjamin terms “homogeneous empty time,”

...which is an inert space endemic to the modern era in which past events are measured equally to present ones, and whose moments, heroes, and villains are selectively chosen for the present.

Explaining history in this manner, however, treats it as if it were another factor of the present like a trade imbalance or background music. Doing so will not get us any further in understanding why it weighs so heavily on Japanese-Korean relations—among others in the region—let alone grasp what history is. Moreover, it traps those involved in what Harry Harootunian calls “the ruse of history”—a charade that tells a necessary story instead of examining inconvenient truths—which is the “empty time” way that the governments participating in the island standoff use what they call history to justify their respective possession of the islands. (Dudden: 5–6)

This paragraph and other brief mentions of the concept of “empty time” (30) or “the ruse of history” (46) are all that Dudden provides in elaborating her perspective. Probably Dudden should have elaborated more on these concepts to ensure that her readers understand what she means.

Meanwhile, Dudden often makes provocative comments about history, such as “But that would be wishful thinking, not history” (24), or “Even quick answers quickly spiral backward into the open-ended mess of history” (52). Similarly, she states, “The ‘empty time’ approach continues to make the entwined histories devoid of their substance, which ultimately cannot work because history [inherently] does not work that way” (Dudden: 30). These and other comments about “the contradictions history causes” (17) make one wonder whether Dudden believes that history has an *essence*.

Dudden also notes the central role of *perception* in apologies and reconciliation processes more broadly. In her words, “what is *perceived of* as so important about them that makes people go to such extremes?” (Dudden: 4; emphasis in original). At this point, however, Dudden states, “the *deeper* problem stems largely from the way history troubles the region” (4; emphasis added). This comparison between perception and the “deeper problem” may indicate a dualist interpretation of reality that separates objective truth

versus “myth.” As Dudden argues, victors, governments, and groups often manipulate history toward their own ends. At the same time, however, will “telling all of the facts” get us away from the mediating influence of human interpretation?

Understandably, Dudden the historian seems irritated by the politicization and cooptation of national history by governments. In remarking upon Japan’s colonial period in Korea, she states, “As of today, the process has wound them all into a knot from which none can escape without unraveling the decades of mythmaking that masquerades as national history and has shaped the respective national identities involved” (Dudden: 4). Would the “unraveling” of this knot actually get rid of mythmaking processes?

There also are some odd moments in the text, such as when Dudden notes in her acknowledgments, “Studying apologies does nothing if not make you understand that money makes some things real” (xiii). This statement indicates something quite important. Consider those words alongside the last line of her text, in which she states, “avoiding matters merely puts things on hold for a future where any meaningful apology would only dissipate in the air” (Dudden: 133). Again, Dudden’s division between imagined and “real” phenomena may indicate a dualistic interpretation, including what arguably is a false dichotomy between material and ideational factors. Namely, money is a social construct, dependent for its meaning on human interaction, as can be seen by the “desert island” test.<sup>6</sup>

More important to our discussion, apologies and financial reparations do not have to be linked together. This connection often is drawn, however, perhaps particularly in the United States, which tends toward legalistic interpretations of responsibility. While perhaps rare, there are examples such as with some of the “comfort women” in South Korea, some of whom did not want compensation from the Japanese because it would imply that they were receiving money for sex, making them akin to prostitutes rather than victims of sustained sexual slavery (Kim 1995: 49).

To return to the issue of overall approach, however, there are different schools of thought about whether scholars should blur the lines between the descriptive and prescriptive in their work. Dudden is particularly critical of the United States’ actions in situations such as No Gun Ri, for example.

Some might want to wish away the whole problem of civilian deaths, which the euphemism so coldly defines as “collateral damage” that cannot be avoided. Such relativism, however, does not calm the lived

events for those involved. More fundamental in the American context, it fails to recognize America's unusual twentieth-century (and now twenty-first century) position of having a demonstrated history of having killed hundreds of thousands of noncombatants during various wars (according to the *most* conservative estimates) while continuing to maintain huge troop presences throughout the world—especially in Asia—that cause civilian deaths unintentionally or intentionally even when no declared war is going on. (Dudden: 107; emphasis in original)

Although Dudden's moral critique is courageous, it occasionally is speculative. Sometimes she makes political manipulation sound expressly conscious in nature, which may or may not be the case, with various parties "using" history toward their own ends. Can one ascribe motive to an entire government, as when Dudden states, "The American government's sudden interest in this history was a matter of damage control, pure and simple" (102)? While understandable, is her phrasing here consistent with her statements elsewhere about the "the open-ended mess of history" (Dudden: 52)? Nevertheless, Dudden's work is impressive and deserves a wide readership because it adds a great deal to our knowledge of international apologies.

Meanwhile, Lind is an international relations scholar with a notable intellectual pedigree and resume. Her systematic approach, controlled tone, and detailed empirics reflect current standards of mainstream social science. The major problem that Lind faces is that of her theoretical ambivalence, which also serves to undermine her conclusions.

Lind indicates at the beginning of her volume that initially she wanted to believe in other ways of interpreting apology than those indicated by realism (vii). Lind shifts from her admittedly idealistic normative starting point—that interstate apologies can improve relations—to her more familiar realm of realism (as evidenced most particularly by Lind 2004). Despite fighting her "findings every step of the way" (viii), she succumbs to what appears to be realism's inexorable logic. Lind herself acknowledges that she presents a defensive realist argument (2009c: 359). This version of realism focuses more on threat perceptions, likely due to the influence on Lind of such nuanced scholars as Robert Jervis, for example.

This stance means that Lind probably is the first scholar to frame the discussion of apologetic remembrance in terms of threat perception, which contributes something

important to the discussion.<sup>7</sup> In her words, “Reconciliation requires that countries stop perceiving one another as a threat,” and that perceptions of “two aspects of potential adversaries: their capabilities and their intentions” (Lind: 4) will be assessed by neighbors. This defensive realist interpretation is intriguing and makes sense.

To return to the curiosity of a realist take on apologetic remembrance, however, realists generally are not interested in such phenomena as apologies, contrition, and reconciliation. Actually, when one discusses such topics with self-proclaimed realists, they seem disquieted, interpreting interstate apologies as setting dangerous precedents. Again, a significant reason for this sense comes from U.S. American legalism,<sup>8</sup> as many interpret apologies as an expression of guilt that can lead to financial liability. There are other possible interpretations of apologies, however.

More typical for realists is to argue that there are geopolitical reasons as to why apologies might be forthcoming in some cases and not in others. Interestingly, Lind downplays this typical realist interpretation, while she acknowledges that some of the reasons for (West) Germany’s relative success in pursuing reconciliation came from the “severe foreign policy constraints” its leaders experienced during the Cold War (Lind 2009a: 142). The necessity of confronting the “Iron Curtain” arguably compelled many Western European states to focus on the immediate threat. At the same time, Lind notes elsewhere “Emerging Cold War fault lines diminished focus on Japan’s atrocities in Asia” (Lind: 32). Both countries did not demonstrate much in the way of contrition to neighboring countries at the start of the Cold War era, but in time, (West) Germany effectively was reconciled with such states as France. What explains the difference in outcome?

While Lind posits several hypotheses and possible counter-arguments to her position, she does not address the fact that Japan is relatively isolated due to its existence as an “island nation.” Unlike (West) Germany’s shared borders with France, Japan’s geographical separation from the rest of Asia lessened the amount and quality of interaction with the outside world. This isolation prevented widespread awareness among the Japanese public of what was occurring abroad during its imperialist era. In contrast, these same citizens were keenly aware of the horror caused by widespread American bombing campaigns of Japanese cities. Of course, one may debate the relative importance of this geographical isolation.

Unlike Dudden's book, in which the United States plays a large and far from benign role in Northeast Asia's history problems, Lind's narrative only emphasizes the *benefits* of the U.S.' involvement as a regional balancer and stabilizer. Thus, certain questions are unaddressed. Were the Tokyo and Nuremberg trials merely "victors' justice"? Are there negative aspects to having U.S. American troops stationed in such places as South Korea, Germany, Italy, and Japan? Is the U.S.' continued presence in Northeast Asia truly essential? How does she interpret the "Japan-bashing" era in the U.S. when Americans often interpreted Japan as a possible competitor rather than a trusted ally?

So while Lind discusses the role of "strategic constraints ... during the Cold War" (182) in the cases of both Japan and West Germany, the implication is just that the Soviet Union's rise created a more limited range of policy options for these two states, and so historical remembrance was downplayed. In realist terms, geostrategic realities "trumped" hyper-nationalism and revisionism. The strong guiding hand of the United States is present as part of this narrative, but only portrayed sympathetically as one of many Western states reacting to negative external stimuli.

Another problem with this lack of acknowledgment of hegemony is that it allows Lind to claim that "International reconciliation is possible—even in the aftermath of horrendous crimes—with little or no contrition" (Lind: 3).

Both the British and Americans reconciled with West Germany without apologizing for fire-bombing German cities, a campaign that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians. Japan and the United States built a warm relationship and solid security alliance in spite of the fact that neither government has apologized for its wartime atrocities: e.g., Pearl Harbor, Japan's mistreatment of POWs, and the U.S. counter-city bombing campaign that culminated in the atomic bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Indeed, both sides justify their wartime actions as necessary given the strategic circumstances of the time.

(Lind: 3)<sup>9</sup>

Lind is correct to point out the important silences involved among different sides. Again, realism explains some of these dynamics in terms of noting the pragmatism of politics, that sometimes "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Such choices may have little to

do with “reconciliation,” however, as they could just be a realist’s judgment of political necessities.

Meanwhile, Lind focuses even more upon the issue of the “backlash” generated by states that give apologies. In Lind’s words, “my analysis draws attention to an issue that has been neglected in debates about contrition and international justice: the potential dangers of contrition” (181). Other scholars (Trouillot 2000; Gorier and Verwoerd 2002; Dahl 2006; Dudden: 140, n4) have pointed out that apologies and other reconciliation efforts can generate great controversy, if not to such a strong degree as Lind.

Meanwhile, Lind’s timeframe regarding backlash seems rather short-term in nature. If one expands the length of time examined, there may also be salutary effects of such discussions, whether one is considering domestic discussions or dyadic relations. Therefore, it may be more helpful to consider each apology debate *as part of a longer-term process* (Dahl 2007: 251).

Lind also poses a questionable linear relationship, “The cause-and-effect relationship between apologies and denial” (93). In her words,

... [Many] have overlooked a surprising pattern. The third finding from this case is that many of the “gaffes” that have so angered Japan’s former victims were in fact *caused* by Japanese contrition. In other words, efforts to apologize galvanized Japanese conservatives to deny, justify, or glorify Japan’s past behavior. (Lind: 93; emphasis in original)

Do apology and contrition attempts actually “cause” backlash, however? Or, do they merely provide a convenient occasion to vent what tensions already are present as part of a broader relationship?

Given her analysis, Lind advises maintaining a balance between contrition and backlash. In her words, “Japan and other countries in a similar situation should follow the Adenauer model: it is a *safer middle ground* between denial and contrition” (Lind 2009a: 133; emphasis added). As Max Weber (1949: 58) indicates, however, that while intuitively appealing, a synthesis position is not necessarily the best.<sup>10</sup>

More broadly, Lind attempts to attain a theoretical “middle ground” of sorts, dulling the sharpest edges of realism but retaining most of its characteristics. This move creates some shifts in tone, from a standard realist analysis of state motivation (for example, see Lind 2009a: 146), largely removed from moral questions, to a more

humanistic approach when discussing atrocities and victims. Of course, some of this tone difference is completely understandable, as the most sensitive topics necessitate some care. Moreover, she seems to accept some contributions from neoliberal as well as constructivist thought in terms of focusing on the ideational (Lind: 196).

Lind raises the issue of whether public contrition is necessary for reconciliation. Others also discuss whether amnesia might work for a period with a society coming to terms with intense violence in its recent past (Cobban 2007). At the same time, however, such findings are short-term in terms of their analysis. It simply may be too soon to say whether amnesia is a feasible long-term path, let alone across cultures (Dahl 2009: 58, 65).

In sum, it is understandable why Lind, as well as prudent political advisors, would advise against the giving of state apologies. As a result, Lind promotes what is in effect a conservative and a “don’t make waves” type of approach. Depending on cultural and political dynamics, however, that may or may not be the optimal path. For one, the issue remains that *not* giving apologies also creates backlash, albeit usually not from ultra-nationalists, but a country’s neighbors instead.

Another challenge to Lind’s book may be on liberal grounds. While a linear understanding of historical progress is not without its own significant problems, there is a question about whether short-term “backlash” is a good reason to lessen the push for human rights or historical remembrance. To provide some comparisons, if people in the women’s suffragist, civil rights, or apartheid eras had not persisted despite domestic “backlash” from ultra-rightists, then little progress might have been made in these realms. Is a balanced, middle ground approach truly the best path to take? Does short-term backlash necessitate moderation in terms of both political means and ends?

Before moving toward analysis of other ways to interpret apologies, a couple of questions remain to pose to each author. Given the title of Dudden’s book, *Troubled Apologies*, are there any times when public apologies are *not* troubled? Add to this concern a question for both Dudden and Lind: When, if ever, do states (or, more precisely, their representatives) *not* politicize memory? These important questions indicate how much both books add to our knowledge of important historical and political issues of apology, reconciliation, and contrition. Now, while Dudden and Lind both touch

upon important issues of identity, nationalism, gender, and culture, let us explore these dimensions more directly.

### IDENTITY DYNAMICS WITH APOLOGIES

For, as John Gillis notes, “Identities ... are not things we think *about*, but things we think *with*. As such they have no existence beyond our politics, our social relations, and our histories” (1994: 5; emphasis in original). Identity conflicts are those that impinge upon a person or group’s “core sense of self.” It also is no mistake that “[d]ifference is constituted in relation to identity” (Campbell 1992: 8).

Thus, it is no surprise that apology debates often indicate the prevalent “inside/outside” dichotomy in international relations (Walker 1992). At one point, Lind states, “In a new twist, *foreign* pressure on Japan to apologize also incited denials” (Lind: 94; emphasis in original). Actually, this dynamic is nothing new—it arguably is rarer for outside pressure *not* to create a nationalist backlash “back home.” For one, the term ‘foreign’ creates a sense of distance between the Self and Other, indicating that the other “does not belong” in a certain discussion or physical location.<sup>11</sup> All of these issues indicate that sovereignty and nationalism arise quickly in political apology debates.

As part of this “inside/outside” dynamic, a particularly troubling issue when it comes to writing about political conflicts is that it is *relatively easy to guess the national identity of the author* (whether scholar or journalist) without seeing his/her name and biographical information. This disturbing facet of international discourse affects discussions of apologies and other reconciliation processes and points to the complex intersections between gender, nationalism, and identity. For example, why do many Japanese historians downplay and Chinese and Korean historians bolster the numbers of comfort women, rapes, and deaths in their accounts of mutual history? Despite noble attempts of scholars and journalists to be objective, national identity and emotions play a significant role in analysis, particularly on matters as contested as these.

Not surprisingly, this principle extends to these works also. Why does Lind emphasize the benefits of United States’ Northeast Asian and European presence so much in her work? Conversely, why does Dudden get so irritated with certain actions or policies of the United States? While one scholar sidesteps the issue of U.S. American culpability, the other’s outrage becomes more evident.<sup>12</sup> The general principle is that one tends to valorize and promote his or her country’s actions (although Dudden goes in the

opposite direction). This dynamic holds particularly true when it comes to Northeast Asian politics, although it would be interesting to compare this phenomenon to other regions of the world.

Another general problem regarding the researcher's national and cultural identity has to do with the complicating effects it has on interviews, whether of average citizens or elites. Lind and I have conducted similar research projects insofar as we both have interviewed people from different sides of conflicts in Northeast Asia, conflicts that usually include some degree of involvement of the United States (Dahl 2006). First, most of the people I have interviewed from the region tend to be more open to and interested in U.S. Americans. There is some self-selection at work, as many other civilians, scholars, and officials refused interviews. Second, some of the more positive responses regarding the U.S.' involvement also may have been due to *politeness*, as some civilians in particular avoided anything negative about the U.S. once the formal interview began, or said significantly more critical comments about the U.S. to an Asian acquaintance before meeting me. Despite my reassurances that I would not be offended, some even told me that I would not like to hear what they thought, or said that they did not want to hurt my feelings and therefore would have little to say on the subject.

Lind has substantial historical evidence about the fact that South Koreans seemed to want the U.S. government in place to restrain an upsurge in Japanese ambitions, especially in the early postwar era (44–45). At the same time, however, one might question whether the findings of Lind's interviews of South Korean officials are quite as sound (90–92), as they may have been stressing points they thought their interlocutor might want to hear. Again, this challenge is difficult to surmount, and would not be Lind or any U.S. American researcher's fault as much as it reflects international dynamics.

Last, the issue of the writers' *cultural* identity is important because U.S. Americans have a tendency to state their point of view directly; something far more unusual in Asian and particularly Japanese contexts in which one's gut indicates when something sensitive should remain unsaid. While these are broad generalizations that need to be employed only with great care, U.S. Americans are socialized to speak with clarity, with men in particular often advised, "never apologize." Meanwhile, Japanese people as a whole often apologize in everyday discourse (Kristof 1998: 40–41), which

makes the puzzle of “apology backlash” in Japan all the more mystifying at first glance (Dahl 2007: 241). Moreover, the Japanese language leads to some areas of indirection and subtlety, with the important word “you” often thought too direct to say in face-to-face interaction. These interpersonal dynamics do have an impact on communication across cultures. Let us consider this dimension of interaction in more detail.

### CULTURAL DYNAMICS

Many international relations scholars assume that statecraft is similar across cultural settings.<sup>13</sup> To a certain extent, international representatives and related personnel operate in a shared “diplomatic culture.” At the same time however, the contingent intersections of space and time faced by the French and West Germans after World War II may have created a unique window of opportunity to reconcile. What “works” between one pair of cultures may not be portable far beyond that setting, although one hopes otherwise in this particular case.

Another important question is whether apology is a phenomenon that exists across cultures. Initial research findings suggest that it is. Nevertheless, there probably are cultures in which people are particularly prone to apologize. For example, apology typically has been associated with Asian cultures (Matsuda and Lawrence 2001: 249–51).

Moreover, cross-cultural communication scholars Barnlund and Yoshioka posit that the act of apology “embodies underlying cultural assumptions and values” (1990: 203). Anthropologists tend to agree, noting that expectations surrounding an apology may differ according to a state’s cultural context (Sugimoto 1998: 271–72).

In contrast, when the question of culture arises, Lind is quick to move onto other topics.<sup>14</sup> In her lengthiest discussion, she states, “social psychologists have identified core components of apologies that transcend cultures; an apology requires admitting past misdeeds and expressing remorse for them” (Lind: 16).

Lind is correct that there appears to be some agreement across cultural settings that an apology is an acknowledgement of culpability, and yet the practical and moral consequences thereof remain contested. For example, there seems to be an assumption in the U.S. that an apology leads to financial and perhaps criminal liability for damages (as with car crashes). Thus, there are incentives not to be forthcoming, let alone to admit fault. Nevertheless, more is at stake than economic self-interest, as, for example, there is a sense in the U.S. that giving an apology places one in a weak and diminished position

(Matsuda and Lawrence 2001: 249–51)—a gendered construct. This tendency seems replicated at the communal and national level for U.S. Americans (Dahl 2006).

Returning to the interpersonal level, however, one of apology's potential uses is as a "face-saving gesture," as mentioned earlier. While "face" is a concept often associated with Chinese and other Asian cultures, scholars note that it has both culturally specific and universal aspects (Ting-Toomey 1994: 3). Therefore, people in all cultures are concerned with face maintenance, what Erving Goffman (1967: 12) terms "facework." Members of any culture must deal with maintaining a positive image and not disrupting the social order. In general, face is lost when a person's "action or that of people closely related to him, fails to meet essential requirements placed upon him by virtue of the social position he occupies." Losing face is quite dangerous to an individual, risking "one's ability to function effectively in society" (Ho 1976: 867). Face maintenance is about promoting harmony and reciprocity in all of one's relationships. Therefore, the people are subject to both internal and external—or individual and collective—pressures. While these issues are cultural universals, it is important to keep in mind that there is a wide range in cultural expression in terms of *what actions* lead to the gain or loss of face.

Apologies also may be considered one aspect of manners or politesse for both Asian and Western cultures.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes an apology can acknowledge that one has transgressed social boundaries and is taking steps to rectify that mistake and bring harmony back to the interaction.

Paradoxically, however, there are situations in which it may be difficult to give an apology due to heightened emotions and one's sense of honor and face. To a certain extent, apology involves placing oneself in a vulnerable position. If the other does not have the social grace to accept it well and perhaps even apologize, too, in response, then the apologizer may experience some humiliation. As Bert Brown notes,

Among the most troublesome kinds of problems that arise in negotiation are the intangible issues related to loss of face. In some instances, protecting against loss of face becomes so central an issue that it "swamps" the importance of the tangible issues at stake and generates intense conflicts that can impede progress toward agreement and increase substantially the costs of conflict resolution. (Brown 1977:

275)

Significant rifts can occur in relationships due to the rejection of conciliatory gestures.

Again, while apologies are complex even at an interpersonal level, complications multiply when raised to the communal or even international level. A state's honor may be socially constructed, but people have proven themselves willing to die when "national honor" has been lost in some way. If one government has caused another to "lose face," it may be necessary for the humiliated state's leaders to try to regain some prestige by taking some counter action(s), whether military, rhetorical, or some combination of the above.<sup>16</sup> Let us explore these differences among levels of analysis.

#### ISSUES WITH LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

As Nicholas Tavuchis notes in his comprehensive treatment of apologies, situations in which one collectivity apologizes to another ("Apology from the Many to the Many") have some peculiar complications. For one, "authoritative deputies" are necessary on both sides to discuss—via "mutually ventriloquial speech"—apologies as "collectivities cannot act (except in a metaphorical sense)" (Tavuchis 1991: 98). While Tavuchis (1991: 98–104) and other commentators have noted the important level-of-analysis difference between interpersonal and public apologies, however, it seems that this distinction is not always so clear. Indeed, when one considers these events closely, there often appears to be some curious slipperiness between levels of analysis. Thus, while scholars often claim that it is more difficult to say you are sorry at a group rather than an individual level, it does not cease the common practice of blurring the distinctions between the two (Dahl 2006).

Indeed, one factor that seems to come into play quite frequently is the "individualization" of interstate situations. As per Benedict Anderson's interpretation of nationalism as "imagined community" (Anderson 1991) one often gets the sense that 'national wounds' affect many individuals practically as keenly as if they had been attacked personally (Dahl 2006). This dynamic becomes most intriguing with those who were not directly part of the original offensive encounter—as with some of those who seek redress for "comfort women," for example. Moreover, this imagined connection to the "body politic" may have a modular quality insofar as this tendency may persist across cultural settings.<sup>17</sup> After all, sovereignty is a norm that many governments embrace, including—or perhaps particularly—those with a historical legacy of being subject to

imperialism and colonialism. Since most countries in Northeast Asia have a history of experiencing such transgression, these issues are salient.

#### GENDER DYNAMICS

Given how soon themes of honor, weakness, and humiliation seem to arise, some scholars have noted the gendered dynamics of apologies.<sup>18</sup> Deborah Tannen notes that, at the interpersonal level, U.S. American women apologize more frequently than men do, due in part to socialization processes.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Tannen and others note that, for many men, apologies mean taking the blame for wrongdoing. Beyond that, concerns exist that apologies signal weakness.<sup>20</sup>

Once again, when lifted to communal and international levels of analysis, these dynamics have historical and political significance. Despite the fact that scholars generally have not considered the salience of gender dynamics to international apologies and apology debates, the issues of the comfort women, “rape of Nanking,” paternalistic post-colonial relations, macho nationalisms and “never apologize” honor-related stances arguably are ripe with such meaning. Therefore, perhaps gender is a compelling angle from which to study apologies. This contribution is one that has an impact on the topic at hand in several ways.

Again, political and historical apologies debates tend to cluster around issues of *sovereignty* and the “body politic.” Such an interpretation relates to gender as the governments of both West Germany and Japan had to emerge after humiliation and imposed demilitarized “weakness” via occupation into economic strength. Consider also the frequent discussion about what it means for Japan to become a “normal” country again. Beyond that, such terms as ‘muscular diplomacy’ as well as so-called hard and soft power (Nye 2004: 255–70) also reinforce gendered notions of strength and weakness.

More particularly, women often symbolize a nation’s honor.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the transgression of sovereign boundaries—whether of a person’s body due to murder or rape, or of the “body politic” by some act of infringement and violence—is an issue of great harm and even humiliation to the larger community. According to Nira Yuval-Davis,

Women are often constructed as the cultural symbols of the collectivity, of its boundaries, as carriers of the collectivity’s “honour” and as its

intergenerational reproducers of culture. Specific codes and regulations are usually developed, defining who/what is a “proper man” and a “proper woman,” which are central to the identities of collectivity members. Feelings of disempowerment which result from processes of colonization and subjugation have often been interpreted by the colonized men as processes of emasculation and/or feminization. (Yuval-Davis 1997: 67)

As Yuval-Davis notes above, such constructions also affect men significantly.

Moreover, given their history of subjugation to colonial and imperial powers, these issues have a great impact on Northeast Asians in particular. The *pervasive acceptance of sovereignty as an international norm* means that there are times when one’s nation will not get what it wants. For while Alexander Wendt argues that “anarchy is what states make of it” (1992: 391), this key feature of the international system still seems to have an impact on groups petitioning for acknowledgment and redress. *Within states*, the assumption of government authority provides groups with a clearer (if not unproblematic) path to justice via the government’s legal system.

With interstate conflicts, however, sovereignty seems an obstacle instead, as the event did not take place under a government’s domestic “jurisdiction.” To whom (or what entity) does an individual or group petition?<sup>22</sup> Moral pressure via international norms may help “shame” a government’s representatives, economic sanctions may impair a government as well as its citizens, and yet for many demanding restitution, the assumed lack of power to effect change is disheartening. These politically charged interactions regarding apologies show us particular aspects of the international system. Let us turn now to an alternate way of investigating apologies.

### **APOLOGY DEBATES**

In terms of scholarship, there are many different ways to investigate political apologies (as well as related topics of reconciliation, contrition, reparations, political memory, and so forth). Some discussions are openly normative, prescribing when apologies are necessary, particularly in cases of long-term historical injustice such as slavery in the U.S., or different countries’ treatment of indigenous populations.<sup>23</sup> Some have constructed typologies to compare apologies to “non-apologies” or “partial apologies” (for example, Lazare 2004). After all, vague statements of generalized “regret” may not

meet the standard criteria of apology. Alternately, one may interpret the *outcomes* of political apologies as cases of simple success versus failure, or in more detail, noting degrees or elements of success.

As one may have noticed, the emphasis of this author's research is quite different, investigating interstate "apology debates" as sites of contested politics. The locus of inquiry is not individual states, but their combined dialogue and negotiations regarding apology. While this move may seem unusual, interstate apologies already involve some strange role-playing, with "states" as the key actors in giving and sometimes in receiving apologies. Indeed, it frequently taken for granted that a given state is responsible for people who have acted in its name—for example, soldiers who wage war. Moreover, many assume that a state can have "a view." All of these anthropomorphisms arise when apology issues arise at an international level, effectively calling the sites and boundaries of politics and "the state" into question (Dahl 2006).

To provide an example of the peculiar dynamics of interstate apologies, consider former President William Clinton's 1998 statement on behalf of the United States government for its lack of response to the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Following a video clip of Clinton's speech, commentator Charles Krauthammer spoke at length during a televised political roundtable to criticize President Clinton for apologizing "too much." Other conservative political commentators such as William Safire and George Will also indicated that apologetic rhetoric was unnecessary or even damaging to U.S. interests.<sup>24</sup> While less vocal, American pundits on the left did not stake much political capital in support of such movements.

Note the strange quality of such assertions. Is it truly possible to apologize too much on behalf of a country and if so, what precisely is the harm? How does one know when a public apology is too much or too little? What are the benchmarks of appropriateness? Surely, Charles Krauthammer was not just talking about manners but something connected to the U.S.' honor and reputation—rather fluid concepts. Despite his words to the contrary, why would a neoconservative like Charles Krauthammer focus so much attention on American state apologies?<sup>25</sup>

After all, at the interpersonal level, such figures as Miss Manners assert instead, "A social apology is not an admission of legal guilt, but a way of defusing tension" (Martin 2002: C12). This sort of face-saving behavior obviously can smooth over

relations. It is logical to assume that apologies, once lifted to the interstate level, similarly would be helpful, but instead various states' representatives seem to resist giving them. If apology is one way to promote reconciliation between groups after a conflict, or, more modestly, improve relations after a crisis, why are they relatively rare? Indeed, if political apology is as insignificant as many realists think, why does it seem so difficult for a state's representatives to give one?<sup>26</sup> *What, then, exactly is at stake* in the giving and receiving of interstate apologies? Why are interstate apologies so controversial?

Perhaps the issue is that communal apologies, like certain other aspects of social life, are "essentially contested." According to W.B. Gallie, such "essentially contested concepts" are prone to debates that,

...although not resolvable by argument of any kind, are nevertheless sustained by perfectly respectable arguments and evidence. This is what I mean by saying that there are concepts which are essentially contested, concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, people across cultures voice opinionated arguments of what a proper apology is (more-or-less its ideal type) and whether and how apologies should be used in public—all without being able to "end" the debate. The various linguistic games and rhetorical devices employed in everyday discussion of these topics can indicate the shaping power of broader worldviews (Ruggie 1998: 19).

Given such dynamics, one fruitful way to investigate conflict is to utilize constructivist theory.<sup>28</sup> This theoretical framework shifts the locus of inquiry from individual actors (in this case, states) to their shared interactions—such as the mutual discussion, debate, and giving (or not) of apologies. Such a framework bridges the troublesome gap between localized, even individualized harm and broader negative impact on society as a whole by focusing on intersubjective understandings.<sup>29</sup> The problem is that a society's shared beliefs can foreclose a government's range of "possible" policy options. The focus of this research program is upon studying the discourse and joint actions that have taken place between or among states regarding these events.<sup>30</sup> Part of this dialogical process has to do with trying to contest and alter norms as part of an ongoing set of transactions.<sup>31</sup> Thus, this constructivist framework has *process* as the ontological focus of study<sup>32</sup> as opposed to variable-oriented methodologies that focus upon the attributes of entities. Apologies thus can be seen as part of an on-going

relationship that will sustain change as interactions continue over time. Given the complexity of group processes of identity, different sides to a conflict will interpret history differently, highlighting certain incidents and ignoring others.

More particularly, this research project surveys common themes or “rhetorical commonplaces” that arise in public discourse in situations involving possible interstate apologies. Rhetorical commonplaces are relatively coherent, recognizable units of rhetoric that often emerge in a given public debate to justify a particular course of action (Jackson 2006: 28–29, 44). They are familiar enough to the respective audience that they are “in the ether.” Occasionally they even function like trump cards in a game, used to provide evidence for one’s stance in a way that truncates further discussion (Dahl 2006).

More often, however, they act much like a grammar for public debate, showing cultural patterns in action—what ideas are recognizable, and, more to the point, *useful* in such contests. They provide a sense of the range what “options” are possible in a given political context—thereby retaining room for significant human agency despite the simultaneous bounding action of social processes.

Initial findings indicate that, when one surveys debates over public apologies, several themes usually arise (although this list is hardly exhaustive): first, that apologies only have merit if they are “sincere,” and second, that apologies can never make up for the events suffered by a particular group. Note that these commonplaces indicate contrasting interpretations about public apology’s potential. Since rhetorical commonplaces are only *weakly* shared among a given public—if they were strongly shared, there would be little debate over them—these contradictory positions are not surprising (Jackson 2006: 28). The next step is to investigate a particular apology debate to see whether and how these typical rhetorical commonplaces emerge. A lengthier treatment of this approach, with a focus on the gender dynamics of interstate debates, is forthcoming. As for now, however, let us summarize some of the insights generated by this approach as well as Dudden and Lind.

#### INITIAL FINDINGS

This essay agrees that international apologies are a topic of increasing importance in a globalized world. Furthermore, this article indicates the range of approaches available to studying interstate apologies. Regardless of methodological choices, however, certain

findings emerge. First, communal apologies are notably controversial. International (and more particularly interstate) apologies are strange phenomena, indicating powerful intersections of history, politics, identity, emotion, gender, and nationalism.

Thus, “apology backlash” is normal and to be expected. Instead, those situations in which there seems to be an absence of backlash are the puzzles, a point that Lind recognizes (182). One might draw the conclusion that contrition is a double-edged sword, as Lind indicates when she states, “we need to better understand the conditions under which it is likely to heal rather than hurt” (186). Thus, Lind seems to agree that interstate apologies are neither necessary nor sufficient for reconciliation (Dahl 2007: 252). All the same, while interstate apology is no panacea, sometimes an exchange of apologetic discourse may be necessary to ameliorate relations in a particular situation.

Lind also is correct insofar as interstate apologies generally do not end debate. Much as Lind notes, the Japanese government cannot “just apologize once and for all” (Lind: 94).<sup>33</sup> That is merely wishful thinking on the part of offending parties and government representatives eager to “move forward.” Despite apology fatigue, debate does not end when we will it.

Once one interprets apology as part of a broader reconciliation process rather than a one-time event (Dahl 2007: 251), however, the issue of backlash becomes less daunting. Given the length of time and scope of harm that particular groups have endured various “historical wounds” of war and conflict, the “offenders” may have to offer additional apologies and other conciliatory measures in order to sustain trust among the parties.

Nevertheless, there are indications that apologies take several rounds of interaction to help reduce cross-group tension even with short-term interstate political crises and near-crises (Dahl 2006). Indeed, these issues indicate that, for some on various sides, *continued conflict is more palatable than the giving of an apology* (Dahl 2006). If so, this indicates that nonmaterial factors such as nationalism, face, prestige, and honor seem to play a pivotal role in such interactions.

Another intriguing finding is that predominant “national narratives” often emerge regarding a particular apology debate, particularly in terms of who/what caused the problem (usually the other side) and how to fix it (Dahl 2006). While opinions vary within each country’s narrative, a national account generally becomes apparent during apology debates.

After all, “nations” generally do not have a bias-free view of history. Rather, nations tend to have a *selective* recall of history, often quite black and white. According to John Gillis, “National identities are, like everything historical, constructed and reconstructed; and it is our responsibility to decode them in order to discover the relationships they create and sustain” (1994: 4).

For example, contestation occurs over the roles of victim and offender. This dual role of both victim and perpetrator seems to be the legacy of nations and states the world over.<sup>34</sup> Government representatives can contribute to this myopia by glossing over negative actions taken in the name of their state, focusing instead upon events in national history in which their own citizens were the victims.

In bilateral relations, this situation can lead two sides to talk past each other, each paying primary attention to one’s own injury—especially if the parties have caused each other’s wound. For example, Dudden notes how South Korean government representatives protested that certain Japanese actions were “inconsiderate of Korean people’s feelings” (30). One often hears such phrases throughout East Asia during apology debates. This seemingly sincere rejoinder is not quite so simple, however, as it allows government representatives to present their citizens as a unified bloc. This government co-optation of national feelings is a typical part of apology debates at the communal level.

Sometimes, the two sides will try to settle the question of which side suffered more—a situation of “dueling victimhoods” (Dahl 2007: 250) and competing nationalisms. When such claims compete for the moral high ground, stagnation may result. Even when episodic controversies subside, these competing claims simply remain in the ether, easily re-deployed at a moment’s notice.

### **CONCLUSION: CONTEXT MATTERS**

To return to the issue of advice, what is the best option for governments in the wake of Lind’s findings? Arguably, not inaction, but carefully considered action, which admittedly is rare in the realm of politics. At the same time, however, it probably is easier for a single leader, like a president or prime minister, to undertake as an individual. In comparison, it is far more difficult for collectivities, such as legislatures, to reach anything close to “consensus” about generating an apologetic statement.<sup>35</sup> The exception

may be when the issue is long past and rather obvious (such as the 2005 U.S. Senate resolution that apologized for not outlawing lynching) and there was no mention of financial reparations. Thus, *the context* that surrounds an apology remains of utmost importance. For example, most would not interpret an apology as beneficial in a case of spousal abuse, particularly if the offense is habitual and denigrating, and previous apologies and promises to reform have come to nothing.

People will continue to scrutinize the wording of apologies for meaning much in the way poems are. Furthermore, an apology's location, dress, rank of the official representative(s) and overall visuals will be just as studied. Various parties in respective national and international media will speculate as to the *motivation* for such words and deeds, as well as whether such actions were "appropriate" or not. There are an endless number of possible "variables" here, so the potential in terms of apology-related research is widespread.

Apology debates indicate a great deal about our political world, and the importance of ideational factors such as honor, face, and nationalism. The heightened levels of emotion that apologies generate contradict rational actor models of behavior that assume that various parties maintain a logically ordered list of instrumental goals. Instead, apology debates indicate that *continued conflict may be preferable to reconciliation* in certain situations when a "simple apology" could reduce tensions.

Nevertheless, there always is cause for optimism. Despite significant constraints, international cooperation and other successes occur.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, both positive and negative evidence regarding conflict resolution and reconciliation dynamics require additional study.

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#### **NOTES**

1. This anthropomorphism of the nation as being capable of "self-reflexivity" creates problems as well as opportunities. On the one hand, this powerful rhetorical maneuver promotes a sense of shared moral strength. On the other, it over-represents a nation as unified in its moral concern.

2. Apologies also appear in the American realm of popular self-help and business-related books. Similarly, apologies often bring a comic or dramatic story arc to its conclusion.
3. Aaron Lazare's study (2004: 6–7) from 1990–2002 of the number of articles that mention 'apology' (or similar words) indicates that public discussion peaked in the year 1997–98.
4. Actually, "World War II" is not entirely accurate in the case of the Japanese government and its neighbors. Japan's imperialist actions in Asia and the "Fifteen-Year War" (1931–45) with China all pre-date World War II proper, 1939–45.
5. It is notable that Lind references journalists the most in making this point (199, n3 and 218, n1).
6. Someone marooned alone on a desert island for years without hope of rescue might only find money useful for making fire, or other creative uses. Money only takes on the importance of legal tender in relation to other humans who also interpret it as having inherent value.
7. At the same time, however, similar interpretations have been available for a while, if not in realist language, such as discussions of enemy images (Holt and Silverstein 1989; Reiber 1991; among others).
8. I use 'U.S. American' as a more specific term than the more general 'American', since the latter also can refer to citizens from Canada to Argentina.
9. Lind uses the shorthand technique often used in international relations, and realism in particular, of referring to individual states as 'Bonn' and 'Germany' or 'Japan' and 'Tokyo'. While convenient, it leads to such anthropomorphic phrases as 'Japan sees itself' (Lind: 2) when states are not exactly entities that "see." A greater concern is that the use of such shorthand may create or reinforce a sense that the other is monolithic in nature, both in terms of the public as well as political leadership.
10. A similar "middle ground" problem arises with the term Lind (86) sometimes uses, 'compromise'. In fact, many scholars and practitioners of conflict resolution promote the use of the term 'negotiation' instead insofar as it simply means 'communication', without any additional sense of agreeing to particular terms. First, the word 'compromise' has negative connotations in several languages (Fisher et al. 1991:33), such as losing or giving up something vital. Moreover, compromise is considered

“lazy” decision making, reliant on a fifty-fifty outcome whether or not this result is optimal (Pruitt and Kim 2003:41).

11. Similar dynamics occur with the words ‘ethnic’ and the legal term ‘alien’.
12. It is notable that Dudden’s work focuses on triangles (Japan-South Korea-U.S.) whereas Lind studies dyadic relations (West Germany-France and Japan-South Korea). Social network theory provides the useful reminder that it may be helpful to think in terms of triads (Scott 2000). Key third parties often affect dyads significantly. A focus on dyads alone may neglect certain key pressures in a broader dynamic. Again, consider the important intervening role of the United States government in both of Lind’s cases.

Furthermore, triangles can help clarify conflict dynamics when there is a question of historical wrongs among states. As with the interpersonal level, often such triangles can represent a dynamic of “victim” versus “offender” with the third role possibly being “bystander,” “intervener,” or even “collaborator” with the abuser. This situation indicates the importance of the third role in the conflict, given that it may vary greatly depending upon the relative degree of awareness of the third party regarding any abuse and whether any steps are taken to rectify the situation. In some cases, the victim may express more anger toward the “bystander” or “collaborator” than the actual offender.

13. Mainstream political science and international relations arguably suffer from a certain amount of ethnocentrism, as most academic programs originated in the U.S. and the UK. To date, British and American universities continue to be responsible for schooling most of those who run similar programs in other countries. In particular, U.S. Americans students of political science are likely to start and finish their studies as “liberals,” albeit not in the common U.S. American understanding of the term. Actually, many realists are prone to believe that the “rule of law” and universal human rights are positive and should be promoted.
14. While Lind rightly warns against a “crude cultural argument saying ‘Japan didn’t apologize because of its culture’ and ‘West Germany apologized because of its culture’” (198), there are many other ways to construct a culture-focused approach without doing the violence of forcing “culture” into an oversimplified variable.

15. A thought-provoking study finds that cultures that demonstrate high levels of concern with politeness also are prone to violence. One speculation is that conflict is suppressed in the culture to such a large extent that when it finally is expressed, it does so in explosive ways (Cohen and Vandello 2004).
16. It is no mistake that “face” is of the rare ideational issues Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Schelling (1996: 116–25) discuss. Schelling begins to analyze face in regard to the game of chicken, using the analogy of two teenaged motorists performing in front of an audience that includes “their gangs and girlfriends,” thereby indicating a masculinist interpretation of conflict (Dahl 2006).
17. It seems easier to observe this individualization of relations, however, when it is occurring elsewhere than in one’s own country.
18. Deborah Tannen (1998), Apologies: What It Means to Say “Sorry,” *The Washington Post*, 23 August, C01. Also, note that Lind, Dudden and I are U.S. American women. We all seem intrigued by how difficult it seems to generate a sincere interstate apology with widespread positive impact.

When preparing to go to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) to research the 2001 EP-3E plane collision incident between the U.S. and PRC, many U.S. American women reacted strongly when hearing about my project, saying, “*Of course* we should apologize!” They indicated that apologizing in this particular situation was the best, most pragmatic approach to get the U.S. crew back safely. In contrast, a number of men told me even more emphatically, “Damn straight, I won’t apologize—they hit our plane!” This apparent split between the sexes among U.S. Americans toward apology is part of what I continue to study. My research indicates some support for the gendered differences in willingness to grant an interstate apology, although notable exceptions also exist. Thus, these data underscore the presence of gendered *norms* rather than absolutes (Dahl 2006).

19. Some feminists and assertiveness proponents advise women not to apologize so frequently, interpreting it as unhealthy self-abasement.
20. Tannen 1998. Again, this initial evidence needs further exploration to see whether the findings hold true across cultures.

21. A gender dimension exists with this concern with the nation as the “body politic.” For one, depictions of “the nation” as a feminized “motherland” contrast with militarized masculine images that represent “the state” (Pettman 1996: 49). Thus, it is not surprising that many times individual East Asian nations are depicted as a woman in peril from the stronger, bullying, militaristic male representing the U.S., Japan, or the West in general. The opera, “Madame Butterfly,” presents another variation of this theme.
22. Compare the call for the Japanese government to apologize to various countries for its imperialist actions to the domestic pressure the U.S. government faces to apologize for the past practice of slavery. Both cases demonstrate the problem of determining collective guilt (and beneficiaries) after significant time has passed and the primary instigators and sufferers are deceased (or are elderly, with survivors of Japanese imperialism). Given these issues, it is not surprising that governments do not always accept responsibility despite significant historical evidence of wrongdoing.

Yet there are differences in terms of the level of analysis with political apologies. While official governments generally are the focus of demands or requests for apologies, Melissa Nobles (2008: 5) notes that sometimes heads of state act on their own. (Moreover, multinational/transnational corporations might be the target of apology campaigns.)

Similarly, what entities pressure for public apologies? In domestic situations, particular individuals or social movements may be at the forefront of petitioning the state to apologize.
23. To assist analysis, this project draws an artificial distinction between prescriptive and descriptive treatments of apology, focusing on the latter. This Weberian approach helps explain the polarized positive and negative tones often seen in discussions of apologies’ worth.
24. In one article, George Will (1998: C07) imagines President Clinton even apologizing to Antarctica.
25. Similarly, Charles Krauthammer (2001: A31) insists in an opinion article on the 2001 EP-3E plane collision incident between the U.S. and China that “these Two Very Sorries were meaningless.”

26. This approach is based upon Harry Eckstein's idea of using "crucial cases" ("most likely" or "least likely") for theory building (1975: 79–137).
27. W.B. Gallie (1955) "Essentially Contested Concepts," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. 56 (January) (The Aristotelian Society, Blackwell Publishing), 169. One example of an "essentially contested concept" is *democracy*. Not only is it necessarily vague, the concept also is "internally complex and admits of a variety of descriptions in which its different aspects can be graded in order of importance" (Shotter 1993: 171). Furthermore, people who try to clarify the concept try to refer to an "exemplar" such as the French Revolution, but such discussion does not help refine *democracy* in a definitive way. Instead, rival argumentations go back and forth, formulated in response to other positions on the topic, with "*no general method* for deciding among the possibilities available" (Shotter 1993: 170). While admittedly ahistorical, this analytic is useful.
28. For the purposes of this article, "constructivism" (also known as "constructionism") means the "thicker" version associated with Nicholas Onuf (1989) rather than Alexander Wendt's (1992) "thinner" variety.
29. 'Intersubjective' means that meanings are shared commonly among a group and therefore beyond the contents of individual minds.
30. This article is *not* making a moral argument that apologies *should* occur in global politics, nor is it focused on whether apologies are given. Rather, this project focuses on the empirical and descriptive issue of the *public debates* that emerge about possible international apologies.
31. This study uses a "configurational" notion of causality versus interpretations of causality in "conventional variable-oriented social science" (Ragin 2000: 5, 64). As noted by Ragin, conventional quantitative analysis relies upon certain isolating and "homogenizing assumptions" as to "populations, cases, and causes" (2000: 5). In contrast, this research program focuses upon the unique and contingent combination of mechanisms that produce the different historical outcomes across space and time. In Ragin's words, "if causation is complex and each outcome may result from various conjunctures of conditions, then it is impossible to estimate each cause's 'independent' effect" (2000: 42). Given a relational focus on actions rather than

entities, I investigate intersubjective cultural processes and transactions to find the culturally and historically specific mechanisms of apology. After all, not all images and discourses take hold (Dahl 2006).

32. Given this orientation, it may be useful to add ‘dynamics’ or ‘process’ after such fixed terms as ‘conflict resolution’, ‘reconciliation’, ‘contrition’, ‘transformation’, and so forth (Dahl 2007: 252).
33. A complicating issue in democracies is that political representation is more diffuse. While individual prime ministers have provided apologetic statements to neighboring states, the Japanese Diet has not. Since the legislature reflects the will of the Japanese people, nearby governments and citizens note the amount of contestation, rationalization, and ultra-nationalistic rhetoric that occurs during such deliberations. Last, while the Japanese emperor has spoken of regret, many citizens in nearby states are awaiting a “true apology” from him.
34. (Dahl 2006). For example, consider the dynamics between the U.S. and Japan regarding Pearl Harbor versus the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
35. The goal of “consensus” may be too high a standard, especially during times of increased tension. This recalcitrance is understandable when one considers how difficult it is to acknowledge that one’s government may be wrong.
36. See Robert Axelrod (1984) or Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall (2000) for numerous international examples.

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