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Korea-Japan Relations Should Not Be Neglected

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English Abstract

It is a shame that President Moon Jae-in's Address on South Korea's 75th Liberation Day did not mention any intention to improve the ROK-Japan relations. No visible effort to ameliorate South Korea-Japan relations is further leading to a bleak future.

Even if Korea and Japan cannot find a solution, they should remain determined to control Korea-Japan relations. However at this point, South Korea and Japan are only reacting emotionally that they are failing to sense co-destruction of themselves. The two sides are even forgetting that they must manage their relationship. They seem fine with simply blaming the other and cut off their relations as no political burden is imposed on either side.

To prevent the collapse of the ROK-Japan relations, and solve the issues regarding the forced labor, Seoul and Tokyo should first reconsider the strategic value of each other in prior to becoming genuine friends. Second, the two sides should be able to understand the minds of people of each country. Third, the leaders of South Korea and Japan should be willing to improve their relations.

As mentioned in President Moon's speech, the Moon administration must first show its action for "joint efforts by Japan and Korea to [...] become a bridge of friendship and future cooperation." President Moon and Prime Minister Abe should hold the ROK-Japan summit and show their will maintain Korea-Japan relations. This should

be the first step in improving Korea-Japan relations. Inter-governmental negotiations should begin now. Then, the relevant departments and political actors in the Korean and Japanese governments should be empowered to produce actual results through dialogues. ❖

※ Translator's note: This is a summarized unofficial translation of the original paper which was written in Korean. All references should be made to the original paper.

※ This article is written based on the author's personal opinions and does not reflect the views of the Sejong Institute.