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**Master's Thesis**

**Neoliberalism and Constructivism in Explaining Historical Animosity:  
A Case Study of Japan and South Korea relations**

by

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(September 2018)

Master's Thesis Presented to

Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University

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Master of Asia Pacific Studies

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### **Certification Page**

I, Tran Phuong Thao (Student ID 51116604) hereby declare that the contents of this Master's

Thesis / Research Report are original and true, and have not been submitted at any other

university or educational institution for the award of degree or diploma.

All the information derived from other published or unpublished sources has been cited and

acknowledged appropriately.

TRAN Thao Phuong

2018/06/14

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## ABSTRACTS

The effects of historical animosity between Japan and South Korea have always been problematic to research about, due to the entanglement of various material and non-material factors. This research is conducted with a purpose to take a look at Japan-South Korea relations under the two IR approaches that examine material factor - neoliberalism and non-material factors - constructivism. The purpose of this research is to answer three questions, which are (1) how neoliberalism explains Japan-South Korea relations, (2) how memory interpretation - a subject of study of constructivism - has taken place between these two countries, and (3) how constructivism is applied in explaining Japan-South Korea historical disputes. To answer these questions, it is necessary to analyze previous researches about this case and examine Japan and South Korea diplomatic policies with each other. In the end, the research has found out that (1) neoliberalism is only applicable in Japan-South Korea relations when it comes to cooperation and interdependence, therefore it fails to examine (2) the shift in the South Korean's memory of Japan when their foreign policies changed, and this is the reason why (3) constructivism is employed to find out that the lack of memory and education sharing is what hinders Japan and South Korea reconciliation.



## **Part I: Introduction**

### **1. Background of the study**

When two people have a serious argument resulting in physical fights, the impacts of the fight do not stay where it takes place but linger and last until everyone involved agrees to wipe them away. The same situation happens to nations and international relations. When two countries had conflicts in the past, which, in their viewpoints, remain not properly solved, they tend to affect the relations at present. How dramatic the effects caused by historical animosities to international relations depends on countries' ways to confront and tackle their problems. Some let the past stay in the past and move on to cooperation. Some, on the contrary, hold the hatred deeply in their national pride, and even though they work together in certain fields, the animosities remain a hindrance to deeper cooperation.

Neoliberals focus on cooperation among nation-states for the sake of national interests. Scholars of neo-liberalism often state that it is possible to thaw the enmities rooted in the past disputes among them by enhancing the interdependence and potentials for cooperation. Constructivists, on the other hand, focus on norms, values and ideas. Their argument on conflict resolution is that reconciliation should be the result of the countries understanding different ideas. This study is conducted to provide a closer look at this point of view and illustrate how the case of Japan and South Korea is applicable for neoliberalism and constructivism on historical animosity.

Japan and South Korea have long been sharing similarities in, for example, culture and tradition, social values, geographic position, and the strategic partnership with the United States. However, the relations between them have been facing deterioration, which resulted significantly from historical disputes. During the period from 1910 to 1945, Korea suffered under the rule of Japanese imperialism. The country was annexed as a part of Japan and was

stripped off several rights, including the right to deal with their internal and diplomatic issues. Until now, even though the colonized time stays in the past, there remains a crack in the Japanese-South Korean relations. On one hand, the South Korean pride is hurt whenever the imperial period is mentioned, and the Koreans claim that it is the Japanese reluctance to make amends for their wrongdoings that deepens the animosities. On the other hand, the Japanese argue that the South Koreans, who always take their compensation for granted, should hold the responsibility for the cold, counter-progressive relations under which both are suffering. However, under the view of neo-liberalists, an amelioration in relations is possible for both countries, as the potential for future cooperation is more beneficial for them than holding on enmities rooted in the past.

## **2. Conceptual framework**

First, the research will take a closer look at historical animosity: its definition, the construction of hatred, and the importance of the past enmity to countries' contemporary actions.

Second, the research will examine historical animosity under the view of neo-liberalists and constructivists. Scholars of neoliberalism argue that enmities resulted from history can be solved through the region's efforts to establish a convention and bridge its economies. Scholars of constructivism suggest that the cold relations between two nations are the result of their hostility and prejudice born in their historical experience, which can only be solved by a common ground for sharing ideas and norms.

## **3. Problem statement and research questions**

There are several major problems that this study will examine and observe.

A case study of Japan and South Korea's historical animosities will test the neo-liberal and constructivist perspectives on the connection between historical animosities and

international relations. Neo-liberalism emphasizes the ability to thaw cold relations into cooperation for mutual interests, but in reality conflict between Japan and South Korea remains despite their various chances to work together. This leads to the need to examine constructivism, which focuses on education, norms, and memory. Scholars of constructivism argue that conflicts originate in disagreements over norms and values, and only by providing a common ground for nations to share and learn to accept different ideas could they erase the disagreements.

In summary, this study is conducted, in order to shed light on three main questions:

**Q1:** To what extent can neoliberalism explain the cooperative yet problematic relations between Japan and South Korea?

**Q2:** How the interaction between Japan and South Korea has changed the way each country perceives memory?

**Q3:** To what extent does the theory of constructivism add to explaining the relations between Japan and South Korea?

#### **4. Research objectives and significance**

Primarily, this study will be a significant endeavor in offering a detailed view on the relationship between historical animosities and the ways countries are connected, from a neo-liberalist and constructivist perspectives, illustrated by the case study of Japan and South Korea. Also, using Japan and South Korea as an example, this study analyzes each country's attitudes and diplomatic strategies involving historical events, along with their arguments and perspectives in negotiations and relevant policies established.

#### **5. Research structure**

The main analysis part of the research is divided into three chapters. Chapter one will take a look into the applicability of neoliberalism in solving Japan-South Korea historical

animosity, which is demonstrated by the evolution in their relations: from the relationship between a colonizer and its colony (1910-1952), through an era of normalization (1952-1965), to a new century of cooperation and alliance (1965-now). However, as historical animosity remains, it is necessary to analyze the continuing disputes between the two in the contemporary era to point out the unexplained space that neoliberalism fails to fill in. This is the main purpose of chapter two. Chapter three will be an effort to assess how much the theory of constructivism can explain the unsettled issues rooted in Japan and South Korea's complicated history and examine whether this approach is able to answer the questions that neoliberalism has left unanswered.

## **6. Scope and limitations**

The study only sees the role of historical animosities in international relations under the neoliberal and constructivist perspectives and does not examine further what scholars of other approaches might view this connection. Also, it only considers the disputes between Japan and South Korea. This study will suggest no strategy for reconciliation between Japan and South Korea today.

## **7. Research method**

### ***7.1. Research design***

This is an exploratory research to examine deeper in the way scholar of neo-liberalist view the role of historical animosity in international relations. With a view especially given to the case of Japan and South Korea in their efforts of addressing tensions fueled by bitterness in the past, this study is expected to draw a detailed picture of how memory affects international relations.

## ***7.2. Sources of data***

The first source of data is from scholars and researchers who have conducted research in the same field. Their experience and background knowledge serve as useful references and a concrete foundation to build my research on. This provided secondary data about how the matter has been observed and examined so far. Therefore, I can design a system of viewpoints and opinions to compare with my theoretical framework.

For the literature review, I employed library and Internet research. Reading material including books, e-books, international relations journals and magazines, and news articles provided secondary data about the understandings of events taking place between Japan and South Korea throughout history.

Last, but not least, I also took a close look at documents made by both the Japanese and South Korean governments, in order to observe each country's foreign policies and official statements. I analyzed them from the official websites of their respective Ministry of Foreign affairs, press conference, and official speeches. These documents serve as primary data for my research, upon which I draw a conclusion about Japan and South Korea's reactions and diplomatic strategy towards each other.

## Part II: Literature reviews

### 1. Historical animosity

#### 1.1. Definition and examples

The term “animosity” refers to hatred, hostility, ill will, or enmity. Historical animosity, therefore, can be understood that hatred one country holds toward another due to horrible actions the latter committed in the past. Taking the case of anti-Japanese sentiments in South Korea as an example, Oh drew a picture of the South Koreans never forgetting the fact that their land in the past was annexed as a part of Japanese territory, and their former generation was enslaved. Under the colonization of the Japanese imperialism, Korea had suffered, and she argues that this is not something easy to forget. The humiliation and pain, which resulted from the colonial period, remain a hard memory for not only the Korean civilians but also the Korean officials’ statements and policies regarding Japan-involved affairs. This can be exemplified by (1) President Park Geun-hye’s continuous refusal toward Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s willingness to build a Japanese-South Korea cooperation, or (2) South Korean education of the past century, which was extremely biased against Japan<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, Tamaki highlighted several events considered as ‘taboo’ when it comes to the negotiations between Japan and South Korea, namely Japan’s sugar coating and whitewashing of history, the textbook interpretation of wartime experience, and the repeated protest movements regarding the comfort women issue. All of the mentioned events reflect the enmities, which resulted from Japan’s colonial past on Korea. He stated that these events serve as (1) a reminder of the Korean’s endurance during the wartime and (2) how this endurance hinders Japan and South Korea’s effort in pursuit of a bilateral relationship.<sup>2</sup> According to

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<sup>1</sup> Oh, S. (2015). *Getting Over It! Why Korea Needs to Stop Bashing Japan*. (I. Otani, Trans.)

<sup>2</sup> Tamaki, T. (2010). *Deconstructing Japan's image of South Korea: identity in foreign policy*.

him, it is not impossible for the two countries to reach harmonious relations, yet the fact that both sides are trying to avoid mentioning these “sensitive” topics makes it harder for them to openly discuss their problems.

Cheong also illustrated historical animosity between Japan and South Korea through two cases.<sup>3</sup> The first case is South Korea continuing asking for compensation from Japan as an admission of their guilt in the past, while the Japanese government only describes the compensation as “economic cooperation” or “congratulatory fund for independence” toward South Korea. The second case is the territorial claim over the Dokdo/Takeshima islets. This case was also examined by Kwon, whose work stated that the claim on the islets for the Koreans is stark evidence of their complete independence from Japan’s annexation, and for the Japanese, of imperial pride<sup>4</sup>.

### ***1.2. The construction of hatred***

The origin of hatred in individuals’ mind was explained sociologically and psychologically by Robin and Post. The two authors claimed that the sociological root of hatred is from human's natural deceptive instinct - one tends to cast doubt on others' actions as he sees the motivation to deceive others in himself. The psychological root of hatred comes from another natural trait of human, which is anxiety toward strangers and the unconscious mechanism of ego defense. The fact that a baby cries when someone who is not familiar to them picks them up is a proof of their explanation<sup>5</sup>.

To Robin and Post, the hatred and paranoia states hold toward each other in the international community take the same mechanism as individuals' hatred. That is, the

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<sup>3</sup> Cheong, S. H. (1991). The politics of anti-Japanese sentiment in Korea: Japanese-South Korean relations under American occupation, 1945-1952.

<sup>4</sup> Kwon, H. (2010). Parallax vision in the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute.

<sup>5</sup> Robins, R. S., & Post, J. M. (1997). *Political paranoia: The psychopolitics of hatred*. Yale University Press.

animosity among nations first arose from either their suspicion of others' ill-motives or their uneasiness about negotiating with someone whose motivation they hardly understand. However, a state is basically a combination of individuals from various groups: races, classes, genders, occupations, and so on. Therefore, the case of hatred among states is more complex and contains more elements than individuals' hatred. Robin and Post listed out seven elements that generate hatred, which are: (1) suspicion, (2) centrality, (3) fear of loss of autonomy, (4) grandiosity, (5) projection, (6) hostility, and (7) delusional thinking. These elements can be applied to individuals and states, with different level of analysis<sup>6</sup>.

*a. Hatred at individual level*

Hatred at individual level takes the form of a mental disorder or paranoia. All the aforementioned seven elements take place in individuals with the paranoid disorder. The person (1) is always suspicious of others<sup>7</sup>, and (2) presumes that whatever the others are doing has ill motivation toward them. In addition, it is common for a paranoia person to (3) regularly suffer from the fear of their privacy being invaded, resulting in (4) the escalation of their grandiosity which makes them irritable when they are challenged by others<sup>8</sup>. They also tend to (5) blame external factors, like the environment or other people for their failures or misfortunes<sup>9</sup>, which (6) intensifies their hostility. Last but not least, an individual having paranoid disorder (7) repeatedly holds the false belief and makes up an inaccurate picture about the world around them<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Robins, R. S., & Post, J. M. (1997). *Political paranoia: The psychopolitics of hatred*. Yale University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Volkogonov, D. (1994). *Lenin*. New York, the United States: Free Press.

<sup>8</sup> Renshon, S. S. (1974). *Psychological needs and political behavior*.

<sup>9</sup> Shapiro, D. (1967). *Neurotic styles*.

<sup>10</sup> Bonime W. (1979). Paranoidpsychodynamics. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 15 (3), pp. 514-527.



All these seven elements culminate in the person's urge to find an enemy or someone rather than themselves to blame.<sup>11</sup> The tendency, as stated by Robin and Post, is appealing to all the human beings to some extents, and it is the foundation of the concept of enemy.

*b. Hatred at group level*

It is possible for groups, as well as individuals, to experience the same level of trauma and paranoia. Robin and Post associated the hatred at group level with two major historical circumstances: the ruthless eras, during which one group suffered from the brutal occupation of other(s), and the periods of social decay prompted by the legacy of the occupation. Each situation encourages a compensatory vision, in which the victim groups develop an expectation that the duty of relieving the pain and suffering in the past is mandatory for their so-called enemies. As a result, if they think that the compensation is not enough to make up for their traumatic past, their suffering will not only remain unsolved but also get fueled and heightened. This leads to a higher and more pervasive level of hatred.

The group level of hatred witnesses the absence of delusional thinking, which only appears in individual level. Other elements of hatred are present at individual levels.

*c. Hatred at national level*

A nation is a group of people in a larger scale of territory, population, and in some cases such as the United States or the United Kingdom, with a larger combination of more religions, races, cultures, and memories. The mechanism of hatred building at group level is, therefore, not much different from its equivalence at national level. In countries like Japan and South Korea, where the diversity of race and religion is not obvious and the majority of the population shares the same belief and tradition, the construction of hatred among the population is stronger, more rapid, and pervasive.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Robins, R. S., & Post, J. M. (1997). *Political paranoia: The psychopolitics of hatred*.

<sup>12</sup> Robins, R. S., & Post, J. M. (1997). *Political paranoia: The psychopolitics of hatred*.

The issue of comfort women in South Korea serves as a telling example. During the World War II, many Korean women were forced to work in brothels and serve as sexual slaves for the Japanese soldiers. To the South Koreans, this is a humiliation, and they hold demonstrations annually in protest to Japan's inhumane actions. Although the Japanese government continually provides indirect compensation to the victims, the South Koreans never feel that it is enough to heal the wounds and ease the humiliation.

This thesis only focuses on the change of memory in international relations, to be more precise, the hatred that is rooted in historical factors. Therefore, some of the seven elements will not be put into consideration: namely grandiosity and centrality, which emphasize states' arrogance; projection and suspicion, which concentrate on states' paranoia about others' motivation; and delusional thinking, which is more applicable in the case of individuals than states. Fear of loss autonomy and hostility will be noted with caution.

The fear of loss of autonomy is clearly illustrated in the case of Japan and South Korea's conflicts. Korea, as we know, was annexed as a part of Japanese territory once in the past, and this remains a wound in their national pride. One telling example about this is the dispute over the Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo to the South Korean, and Takeshima to the Japanese). Kwon described the issue over the islets as a symbol of South Korean's complete freedom from Japan's annexation. Japanese claim on the islands, in their eyes, is equal to Japan's effort to regain control a part of Korea's territory, bring back the dark past of the colonized era, and threaten their autonomous rights over their own land<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Kwon, H. (2010). Parallax vision in the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute.

### *1.3. The importance of past memories*

Kim described memory as a factor that “keeps history alive” through the memorable past events<sup>14</sup>. The memory of a state is characterized by its national identity, pride, shame, and responsibility. In addition, memory is the work of remembering, forgetting, retrieval and deletion, which are changeable and modified by media and commemorative agents.

The problem of memory among North East Asian nations, as explained by Schwartz and Kim, refers to “the distribution of beliefs, feelings and moral judgments about the past.”<sup>15</sup> They argued that history is the primary vehicle employed to transfer and make memory pervasive, through a process of selecting facts that are appealing to the society’s ideal and turn them into products of “reputational enterprise.” It is also stated in their book that the collective memory of a nation does not only consist of history and common beliefs but also relationships among its population.

Memory plays an important role in driving nations’ decision of international affairs. Tamaki described the case of Japan and South Korea relations as an example of how a bitter memory obstructs international cooperation. According to the author, much of the reported issues regarding bilateral relations between these two countries center on one problem: wartime memory. The memory of the South Koreans reminds them of the humiliation and sufferings under the brutal rule of the Imperial Japanese, which leaves the issue regarding historical events between Japan and South Korea a taboo of every negotiation. These issues either should never be mentioned or will fuel the Koreans’ hatred toward Japan, even when the imperial period is over. The hatred, as the result, plays as an obstacle in any effort to bring the two countries together<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Kim, M. (Ed.). (2015). Northeast Asia’s memory problem.

<sup>15</sup> Kim, M., & Schwartz, B. (Eds.). (2010). Northeast Asia’s difficult past: essays in collective memory.

<sup>16</sup> Tamaki, T. (2010). Deconstructing Japan's image of South Korea: identity in foreign policy.

Tamaki also characterized memory as the foundation of national identity. He stated that memory represents an enduring narrative of identity, and the question of a nation's identity at present can be answered when it is put beside the question about what it was in the past<sup>17</sup>. This is supported by Pollman's argument about the way memory is described and modified through a process of remembering, forgetting, retrieval and deletion. Taking the case of the revisionist Japanese as an example, their remembering and worshipping of the "glorious past" and "samurai spirit" along with the avoidance of wartime atrocity suggests the basis upon which Japanese diplomatic strategies are built. Japan always tries to appear in the international community as an anti-war nation, but in fact, it is neglecting its military colonization in wartime<sup>18</sup>. The example illustrates how a nation's foreign policy is driven by the politics of memory.

## **2. The development of Northeast Asian memory study**

Memory study has a long history of development. This research paper only focuses on the development of memory throughout the three decades of the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s, as the subject of the research remains exclusively at recent Japan-South Korea relations. These three decades have witnessed the most significant changes in how memory is brought into consideration. This thesis observes the development of memory study in terms of (1) how the concept of "memory" is defined and examined in IR study and to what extents this concept is differentiated from its more casually understood counterpart, (2) the focus of memory study in Northeast Asia, (3) the factors that leads to different interpretation of memory and (4) the connections between these differences and international relations, and (5) the study regarding

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<sup>17</sup> Tamaki, T. (2010). Deconstructing Japan's image of South Korea: identity in foreign policy.

<sup>18</sup> Pollmann, E. M. (2016). Japan's Security and Historical Revisionism: Explaining the Variation in Responses to and Impact of Textbook Controversies

the presence of third parties, or “outsiders,” when it comes to the matter of memory between two particular nations.

### ***2.1. The development in defining memory***

During the 1990s, most of the author utilized the word “memory” in international relations study without providing any proper definition that differentiates it from its common usage<sup>19</sup>. Also, there was no distinguishable study between individual’s and state’s memory at this time<sup>20</sup>. In the 2000s, although the authors have managed to identify the differences between the “memory” used in their study and the “memory” casually perceived, they still use the same word<sup>21</sup>. However, the decade of 2000 has witnessed a step forward in memory study, as individual’s and state’s memories are now separately brought into consideration. Precisely, books during this time provided different definitions for each, yet they still used the term “memory” for both, hence led to misunderstanding in some cases<sup>22</sup>. After 2010, the term “collective memory” is used to single out the subject of memory study in IR, and it is examined not separately, but in accordance with other concepts such as culture, religion, norms and values, states’ behaviors, national pride, shame, and moral judgments<sup>23</sup>.

### ***2.2. The development of the focus of studies***

In the 1990s, memory was focused only at national and domestic level. It is safe to say that the studies at that time were either “too wide” (compared to individual or interested group level<sup>24</sup>) or “too narrow” (compared to regional or international level<sup>25</sup>). In the 2000s,

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<sup>19</sup> R. S. Watson, (1994). *Memory, History, and Opposition Under State Socialism*.

<sup>20</sup> Gong, G. W. (1996). *Remembering and Forgetting: The Legacy of War and Peace in East Asia*.

<sup>21</sup> Fujitani, T., White, M., L. Yoneyama. (2001). *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific Wars*.

<sup>22</sup> Jager, S. M., Mitter, R. (2007). *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*.

<sup>23</sup> Kim, M., Schwartz, B. (2010). *North East Asia’s Difficult Past: Essays in Collective Memory*.

<sup>24</sup> R. S. Watson, (1994). *Memory, History, and Opposition Under State Socialism*.

<sup>25</sup> Gong, G. W. (1996). *Remembering and Forgetting: The Legacy of War and Peace in East Asia*.

discussions regarding memory were brought up to national and international levels, but the research of this time remained shallow and did not really look deeply into many aspects of memory<sup>26</sup>. In the 2010s, the studies focus deeply on many aspects of memory at both domestic and international levels. Particularly, memory at domestic level is analyzed through the formation of national identity, and memory at international level is scrutinized via the influence on countries' foreign policy<sup>27</sup>.

### ***2.3. Factors that cause different memory interpretation***

As the 1990s studies mainly focused on domestic level of memory, the causal factors of memory are identified as two contradictory concepts: the control of the states on history writing and what people remember<sup>28</sup>. In the 2000s, these factors remained under investigation, but the control over memory creation of the winning side of the war was also added to consideration as a factor that contributes to the clash of memories. Ten years after that, many other aspects such as culture, religion, media, and so on are examined as factors as well, suggesting that the study has inspected deeper and in a more multifaceted manner into the issue of memory in the light of a cross-cultural and multimedia environment<sup>29</sup>.

### ***2.4. Memory interpretation and international relations***

The connection between memory interpretation and international relations was barely mentioned during the 1990s. Because memory is mostly focused on domestic matters, the contradictory interpretations of memory were also discussed limitedly at national level<sup>30</sup>. One decade after that, scholars have drawn a one-way arrow between the two concepts by

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<sup>26</sup> Jager, S. M., Mitter, R. (2007). Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia.

<sup>27</sup> Glosserman, B., Snyder, S. (2015). The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States.

<sup>28</sup> R. S. Watson, (1994). Memory, History, and Opposition Under State Socialism.

<sup>29</sup> Kim, M., Schwartz, B. (2010). North East Asia's Difficult Past: Essays in Collective Memory.

<sup>30</sup> Kim, M., Schwartz, B. (2010). North East Asia's Difficult Past: Essays in Collective Memory.

describing memory as a determinant of foreign policy<sup>31</sup>. Additionally, different interpretations of memory have been brought into consideration during the 2000s, and as the result, the multiple aspects such of foreign policy such as human rights, trans-border agreements, foreign aid and so on are subjects of the study as well<sup>32</sup>. This leads to the neglect of the details in memory studies during the 2010s, perhaps because scholars believe that works during the 2000s have pointed out enough necessary insights in this area. On the contrary, the influence of memory interpretation on states' behaviors and international relations during the 2010s focused on and was discussed at many levels, from the sharing of memory among individuals and groups in many nations, to among nations and regions<sup>33</sup>. However, none of these works has pointed out the other way of the arrow. It is true that memory is able to play the crucial role of a determinant of policy, but the matter of whether states' behaviors and foreign policy can change the way people remember, or the way memory is perceived, remain unexplored.

### ***2.5. The presence of the “outsider”***

Memory interpretation and its effects on international relations should be examined beyond bilateral contexts because international relations is not limited in the interactions between two countries. A third nation, or an “outsider,” which does not directly involved in the memory problems between two countries, sometimes intervenes for the sake of its own interests. In this case, the third party can play the role of a pacifier or peace-wrecker. Either way, this presence, more or less, influences how memory is perceived among nations.

The works during the 1990s did not examine the presence of the third party in the issue of memory. Their counterparts in the 2000s did, but the process remained shallow on the surface, and the “third party” was not seen as an important component in memory issues. In

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<sup>31</sup> Fujitani, T., White, M., L. Yoneyama. (2001). *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific Wars*.

<sup>32</sup> Jager, S. M., Mitter, R. (2007). *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*.

<sup>33</sup> Glosserman, B., Snyder, S. (2015). *The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States*.

the 2010s, this matter is examined carefully and works indicated that the involvement of an outsider can be considered an important component of forming a framework that solves (or worsens) problems involving collective memory. Nevertheless, all of these works so far, if they do, have viewed the United States as the only “outsider” and neglected the emerging power of China in the region, which can also affect the memory issues in Northeast Asia<sup>34</sup>.

### **3. The applicability of neo-liberalist view**

Amelioration in relations requires solutions for historical disputes, regarding the fact that a truly effective cooperation is built only when the tensions are defused. Schoff and Kim noted that in the context of meetings between Japan and South Korea's officials, the easy step to achieve an improvement in relations is finding sufficient common ground for the remaining deep-rooted problems in both countries' history. The challenging step, however, is bridging the gap between two peoples' perceptions over Korea's colonial experience<sup>35</sup>.

Another probable suggestion for the thaw in Japan-South Korea conflict is for both sides to change their points of view over history<sup>36</sup>. This, according to Schoff, “could be the first step in promoting mutual understanding” between Tokyo and Seoul. Exchanging lecturers, scholars, and academic researchers in the field of history and geography can help it, to bring fresh perspectives from one country to another. In addition, Selden and Nozaki stated that reducing political viewpoints on historical and geographic matters, in order to shift their debates from seriously political discussions into more academic and civil society discussions, will also potentially call for a halt for the tensions between these East Asian nations<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Glosserman, B., Snyder, S. (2015). *The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States*.

<sup>35</sup> Kim, D., Schoff, J. L. (2015). *Getting Japan-South Korea relations back on track*.

<sup>36</sup> Oh, S. (2015). *Getting Over It! Why Korea Needs to Stop Bashing Japan*. (I. Otani, Trans.)

<sup>37</sup> Selden, M. & Nozaki, Y. (2009). *Japanese Textbook Controversies, Nationalism, and Historical Memory: Intra- and International Conflicts*.



Moreover, according to Jackson, mutual concerns and interests that Japan and South Korea have long been sharing also play a significant role in drawing the two countries closer<sup>38</sup>. Concerns including their fear over North Korea's nuclear programs and economic crisis, for example, have recently brought Tokyo and Seoul into negotiation and cooperation to strengthen and enhance their power. Interests, such as their strategic partnership with the United States, their roles as signatories of many trans-border treaties and agreements, along with the similarities they have been sharing in culture, ideology, social values, and customs, are also important factors that make the two drift to the same side<sup>39</sup>.

#### **4. The applicability of constructivism**

Constructivism is the approach that emphasizes on normative structure, the power of norms and ideas, and the importance of sharing memories, values, and ideologies among nations. Similar to realism and neo-liberalism, constructivism regards power as the center of international relations. Nevertheless, while power according to realists and neo-liberalists is examined in material terms, such as military, political or economic potential, scholars of constructivism look at power as a discursive term that highlights the power of ideas, culture, and language<sup>40</sup>.

According to scholars of constructivism, conflict is caused by the realist-like norms based on each states' different perceptions. In the world where various ideologies exist and encounter, the clash of norms and beliefs is an inevitable outcome. Historical animosity is a part of this clash. A nation's hostility toward another rooted from the haunting wartime memory makes both unwilling to take part in international affairs with each other, and the reluctance obscures the potential to solve their historical problems. The origin of this dilemma

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<sup>38</sup> Jackson, V. (April 2015). How to fix the Japan-South Korea relationship.

<sup>39</sup> Glossman, B., Snyder, S. A. (2015). The Japan-South Korea divide.

<sup>40</sup> Mingst, K. A., & Arreguín-Toft, I. M. (2013). Essentials of International Relations: Sixth International Student Edition.

is memory and prejudice formed by the memory, which are the subjects of constructivism. Likewise, if the matter of historical animosity is examined through a constructivist lens, the foundation of hatred among nations might be detected.

Additionally, constructivism can provide an answer for the question of the sour relations between Japan and South Korea left by neo-liberalism. They are, (1) why there has been little to no amelioration in their relations? and (2) what can be seen as a basis for amelioration? It is possible for conflicts, as suggested by constructivists, to be solved by a common ground in which different ideas and norms are shared. In other words, the animosity rooted from historical events and haunting memory can be weakened if the two sides are brought into a proper negotiation, in which one can listen to others' points of view with respect, and has the rights to present their ideas. In the case of Japan and South Korea, this has been in fact suggested as a probable factor of the thaw in Japan-South Korea conflict.

## **PART III: Analysis**

### **1. Neoliberalism about Japan-South Korea relations**

#### ***1.1. The importance of mutual interests and cooperation***

In the era of globalization, the growth of integration among nations allows what is happening in one country goes across their physical border. As the result, the so-called “national interests” are no longer appealing to one nation, but become mutual and draw attention of others as well. Challenges and difficulties most of the times do not influence one nation alone, but have impacts on many others. Developed nations are able to assist the less developed ones to deal with their problems and receive resources in return. Take the case of Japan and South Korea’s financial support for Southeast Asian countries as an example. While the formers invest money into the latter, helping them with infrastructure and partially solving unemployment, the latter provide human resources, natural resources, spaces, and markets.

However, interdependence and cooperation do not only work as a give-and-receive model. Globalization also paves the way for the growth of political, cultural, religious and economic commonalities that support integration. When it comes to integration, it comes to the matter of cooperation and interdependence. Scholars of neoliberalism argue that these interests and concerns are what bring countries and regions closer to each other, and cooperation and interdependence have become necessary when it comes to problem-solving and profit-gaining. When a problem takes presence in a region, all the countries in the region are able to feel threats and the urge to stop these threats. This motivates them to collaborate and work on a plan to bring about solutions to their mutual problems. The same way works for benefits: when some countries see the opportunity but one does not have enough resources to

get what they need, the others will get involved and help, and the gains will be shared equally among them as a trophy.

Last, but not least, neoliberals also believe that the formation of inter-state engagements on regional and global scale is a significant factor in conflict resolution. This is another supporting point for their argument about the importance of interdependence and cooperation. Once countries and states are entangled in a system that requires its every entity to work in accordance with each other, they have to leave aside the remaining conflicts to focus on mutual interests or concerns. Interdependence forces countries to focus on the so-called “bigger goal” - that is their mutual interests and/or concerns - instead of their disagreements, and cooperation brings them closer. It can be exemplified by how Japan and South Korea, despite their remaining historical animosity and ongoing disputes, are still economic partners. On one hand, Japan is considered South Korea’s steadiest and most potential market for entertainment, proven by the fact that the land of the rising sun is the dreamland for many South Korean artists and entertainment companies. Japan is also South Korea’s fifth biggest trade partner in terms of export sales during 2017, according to the statistics of World’s Top Export<sup>41</sup>. On the other hand, based on the data from the same resource, South Korea takes the third place after the United States and China in Japan’s major trading partner in the same period<sup>42</sup>.

## ***1.2 Neoliberalism on Japan-South Korea relations***

### *1.2.1 The era of normalization*

- a. A past of annexation and its legacy

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<sup>41</sup> Retrieved from World’s Top Exports <http://www.worldstopexports.com/south-koreas-top-import-partners/>

<sup>42</sup> Retrieved from World’s Top Exports <http://www.worldstopexports.com/japans-top-import-partners/>

It started with the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1905, also known in Korea as Eulsa Unwilling Treaty or Japan–Korea Protectorate Treaty, which was signed between the Empire of Japan and Korean Empire after Japan’s victory in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War. The treaty had two purposes: to deprive Korea’s rights of conducting diplomatic exchanges with other countries, and to make Korea the protectorate of Japan. Two years later, another treaty was concluded on July 24, 1907. This treaty was the next step of Japan to annex the Korean Peninsula as a part of its territory, as its main provision is to rip off Korea’s administration over internal affairs and turn it over to Japan<sup>43</sup>. Furthermore, the 1907 Treaty also forced Korea to act according to the guidance of Japan, which brought all the government of Korea under the control of Japan. In short, after the two treaties in 1905 and 1907 with Japan, the Korean Peninsula had lost all its rights to control both domestic and international matters. The annexation was completed on August 22, 1910, after the signing of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty that provided the Japanese Empire with the rights to officially take possession of the Korean Peninsula and have the full rights over the control of Korean administration<sup>44</sup>. The 1910 Treaty had marked a painful chapter in Korean history and left behind the unhealed wound that severely affects the relations between Japan and South Korea even in recent time.

The legacies of the colonial era are the most remarkable obstacles for Japan and South Korea to sit on the same side. In South Korea, the anti-Japanese sentiment is a product of the falsification and fabrication of history, which do not look at the matter from every angle. The intentional misinterpretation of history from the South Koreans tolerates toward only one side of the story: the side where the Koreans were the humiliated victims whose lands snatched

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<sup>43</sup> Korea's Appeal to the Conference on Limitation of Armament. In Korean Mission to the Conference on the Limitation of Armament, Washington, D.C., 1921-1922.

<sup>44</sup> Caprio, M. (2009). Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945.

away by the evil Japanese. This gives the Korean students a false impression that associates Japanese's actions with stealing and robbing; whereas, more objective historical angles point out that these were the Japanese colonial government's policy of land-reforming and modernizing the administration of land ownership<sup>45</sup>.

In addition, the legacy of the colonization also triggers the ideology of *Japanese being the inferior, Korean are superior* in the South Koreans. The South Koreans never forget that the Japanese were “barbarian by blood and aggressive by nature” because of the belief that it was the Koreans pilgrims that had brought cultures to the land of the rising sun. This is a humiliation to the South Korean to have been annexed and enslaved under the rule of the Japanese imperialism centuries after that<sup>46</sup>.

Nevertheless, the South Korean is not the only one to be blamed in this case. If the South Korean plays the role of the stubborn nation who clings onto the enmity having lasted for decades, the Japanese, on the other hand, is the one that does not truly acknowledge what they have done as crimes or fault. This is because of three reasons. The first one is history falsification. Like the South Korea who viewed themselves as the victims, the Japanese viewed themselves as the “enlightener” and “reformer.” This results in their denial of taking responsibility of what accused as “crime” during wartime<sup>47</sup>. Second, it is Japanese culture of honor, dignity, and especially nationalism that refrain Japan from admitting their wrong in the incidents with South Korea. Regarding the current situation in South Korea where the anti-Japanese sentiments and the hostility are serious, it is very likely that Japan’s apology would be rejected<sup>48</sup>. To the Japanese, saying sorry on the brink of possible rejection is equal to humiliation. Third, the continuous demands from South Korea for compensation, as well as

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<sup>45</sup> Oh, S. (2015). *Getting Over It! Why Korea Needs to Stop Bashing Japan*. (I. Otani, Trans.)

<sup>46</sup> Formichi, C. (2014). *Religious Pluralism, State and Society in Asia*.

<sup>47</sup> Fukuoka, K., Schwartz, B. *Northeast Asia’s difficult past: essays in collective memory*

<sup>48</sup> Tamaki, T. (2010). *Deconstructing Japan's image of South Korea: identity in foreign policy*.

the exposure of Japan's annexation over Korean Peninsular and their crimes during wartime on make them think their apology is "enough."

b. The process of normalization

The process of normalizing Japan-Korea relations was described by Park Won-soon as a series of "torturous negotiations." It had taken place through seven meetings over a period of 14 years from 1952 to 1965. Started with a meeting in 1952, which was held after a preliminary meeting organized by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers headquarters in Tokyo, their first attempt to negotiate met a dead end with Japan asking for the return of their properties in South Korea. This was considered a sign of disrespect to the South Koreans, as they felt Japan did not actually feel guilty for its crimes. The hostility between the two, as the result, remained strong and visible. As reported by Park, South Korean President Syngman Rhee "loathed Japanese with a passion" and never had the intention to hide his "emotional and nationalistic" attitude towards the Japanese<sup>49</sup>. A year later, two other meetings took place in attempt to bring the two countries closer, which once again ended up in anger and stronger hostility to both sides. The first meeting of 1953 was held from April 15 to July 23 and was concluded without any agreement. The second one was convened in October and ended with a firestorm from the Korean side when the chief Japanese delegate in negotiations, Kubota Kanichiro, told his Korean counterpart that the 35 years of Japan's occupation over Korea brought about nothing but benefits to the Korean people. The consequence of this talk was five years of deadlock in Japan-South Korea relations, which even drenched their later talks in antagonism and distrust. In 1960, they eventually managed to call for another meeting that again did not overcome disagreements. The same situation happened at the meeting in 1961, when the Korean government of Chang Myon decided to return to negotiation. The

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<sup>49</sup> Park, W. (2010). Korea-Japan Treaty, Breakthrough for Nation Building.

meeting, however, was interrupted by the military coup d'état led by Park Chung-hee and his allies, causing a reform in governance of South Korea.

Park Chung-hee realized that South Korea economy was facing problems, and he had all the reasons to turn to Japan for assistance. South Korea's economic status at the beginning of Park's presidency was described like this:

The per capita annual GNP stood at \$80, only \$9 more than its level at the end of the Korean War in 1953. The annual growth rate remained 1.1 per cent, the trade deficit hit \$310 million, the unemployment rate reached 11.7 per cent, and inflation ran at 10.5 per cent. Moreover, the United States was decreasing aid to South Korea as part of its global foreign policy to replace grants-in-aid with loans. Hence Park needed an extra source of economic and financial assistance that would be strong enough to support Korea's first Five-year plan and provide for his own political survival.<sup>50</sup>

Park's realization marked a turning point in the seemingly stuck progress of normalization between Japan and South Korea. In October 1961, with pressure from the United States on both sides and the necessity of South Korea to find help, the two governments once again sat down together. They achieved their first breakthrough in November 1962, with the exchange of a "Memorandum" between Korean CIA director Kim Jong-pil and Japanese Foreign Minister Ohira Masayoshi. Particularly, the two governments agreed on the amount of money that South Korea required from Japan in compensation for their misbehaviors during wartime: \$3 million as a grant, \$2 million as government loans, and \$1 million (later increased to \$3 million) in private commercial loans. This meeting was concluded in 1964, paving the way for the last meeting and the normalization. In February 1965, the Korea-Japan Basic Treaty was signed, which refuted the treaties signed in 1905, 1907 and 1910, and more importantly, established normal diplomatic relations between Japan

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<sup>50</sup> Choi, J., et al. (2010). Economic Development Fund : Korea-Japan diplomatic Normalization.



and South Korea. This Treaty also contains their agreements on the amount of compensation from Japan, the settlement for problems regarding Japan's recognition of the legitimacy of the Republic of Korea's government, and lay the foundation for economic cooperation in the future. With this Treaty, Japan-South Korea relations have finally completed the process of normalization<sup>51</sup>.

### *1.2.2 Cooperation and alliance after normalization*

The year of 1965 marked the time when the Japan-South Korea relations have shifted from normalizing into cooperating. Some could say that it is possible to classify their relations as an alliance, at least with the United States as a common connection. The matter of whether South Korea and Japan can be allies without any bridge in the middle continues to be debatable. In addition, mutual concerns and interests are the key factors that make Japan and South Korea, wanting or not, lean toward the United States. This is what neoliberalism would have predicted.

Mutual interests and concerns come in the shape of economic interdependence and security cooperation, which are the basic standards to assess how strong a relationship can be. This is also the focus of this section. Precisely, in this section, the author will examine the evolution of Japan-South Korea relations through the prosperity each of them has achieved by working together on the various matters regarding security and economy. These achievements serve as the basis to evaluate the benefits Japan and South Korea have gained from their collaboration, and more importantly, how these benefits make them leave historical animosity aside to shake hands and team up with each other.

In terms of economic interdependence, it is necessary to look into the details indicating how strong the trade between Japan and South Korea has been. The proximity in geography,

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<sup>51</sup> Takahara, H. (2015). Signing of 1965 normalization treaty sparked sharp contrast in reactions.

along with the easiness in transportation, has made the trade between the two countries bloom drastically. Since their normalization when they agreed to open up their border for goods transactions and market expansion, their economic interdependence has drastically been enhanced. Chart 1, chart 2, table 1 and table 2 show Korea-Japan economic interdependence through the import-export aspect since their normalization in 1965 in comparison with the United States and China.

a. Export

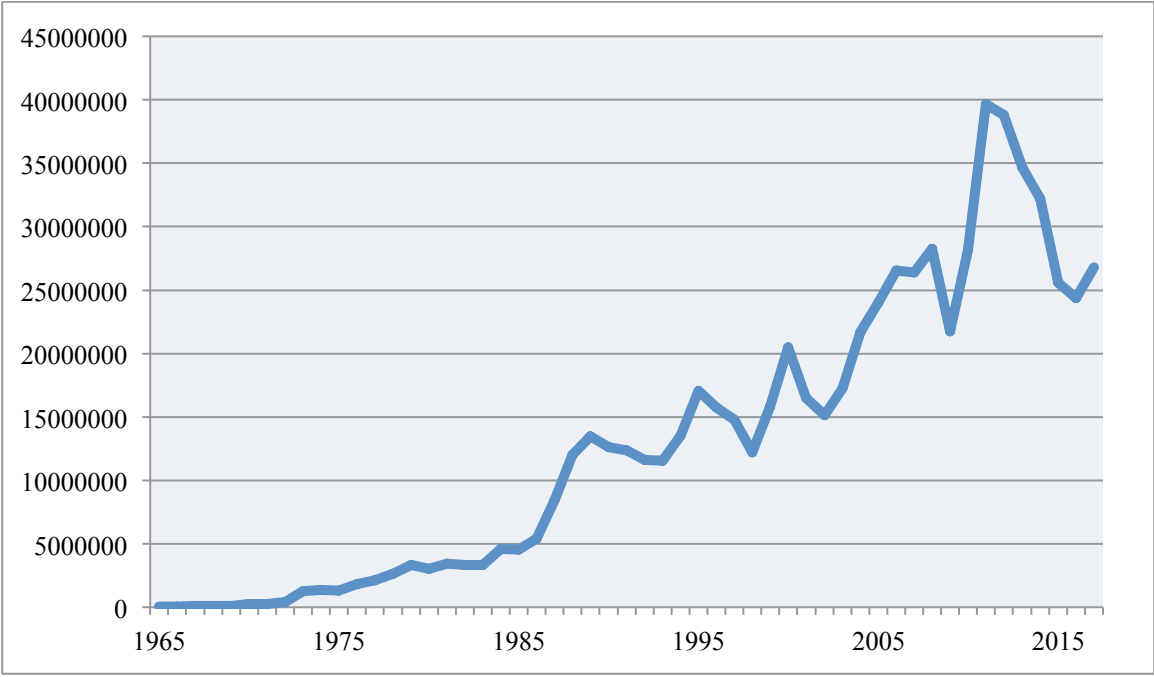


Chart 1: South Korea export to Japan since Japan-South Korea normalization<sup>52</sup>

In terms of export, the indicator, in general, has shown the trend of a rapid increase since South Korea normalization with Japan in 1965. Despite fluctuation, the trend has remained upward. This suggests a remarkable growth of Japan-South Korea economic interdependence. However, the drops should not be ignored. According to Chart 1, some of the most remarkable drops took presence in the years of 1995, 1999, 2003, 2010 and 2012, and

<sup>52</sup> Data retrieved from the Korea Statistical Service <http://kosis.kr/statHtml/>

disappears a few years after that. The period that receives that most attention is 2010-2013, when the export indicator witnessed a sudden rise in 2010 only to see a drastic downward 3 years later. Table 1 below will explain the reasons behind.

Period	Japan	The United States	China
1965-1974	393,330	504,192	0
1975-1984	3,047,652	5,566,060	12,642
1985-1994	11,805,269	19,306,504	2,588,268
1995-2004	17,375,789	30,883,629	25,776,431
2005-2014	29,431,110	56,230,491	117,476,332

*Table 1: South Korea average export to Japan, the United States and China after 1965  
(thousand dollars)<sup>53</sup>*

Table 1 suggests the appearance of China in South Korea's export destination and the increase of South Korea-China economic interdependence was a major reason why South Korea export to Japan had reduced. In the period when the trade between China and South Korea began, South Korea average export to Japan was 241 times higher than that with China. The dominant role of Japan and The United States remained for two decades, although the gap between South Korea's export indicators to Japan and China was remarkably smaller. This was the sign of China rapidly catching up with Japan. The trend changed in the period of 1995-2005, when China surpassed Japan and became the second largest export destination of South Korea. In the 2005-2015 period, China surpassed even the United States by roughly 61 million dollars, becoming South Korea's largest export destination. In short, the more South Korea is tilting toward China, the more its interdependence with Japan goes downhill.

<sup>53</sup> Data retrieved from the Korea Statistical Information Service <http://kosis.kr/statHtml/>

b. Import

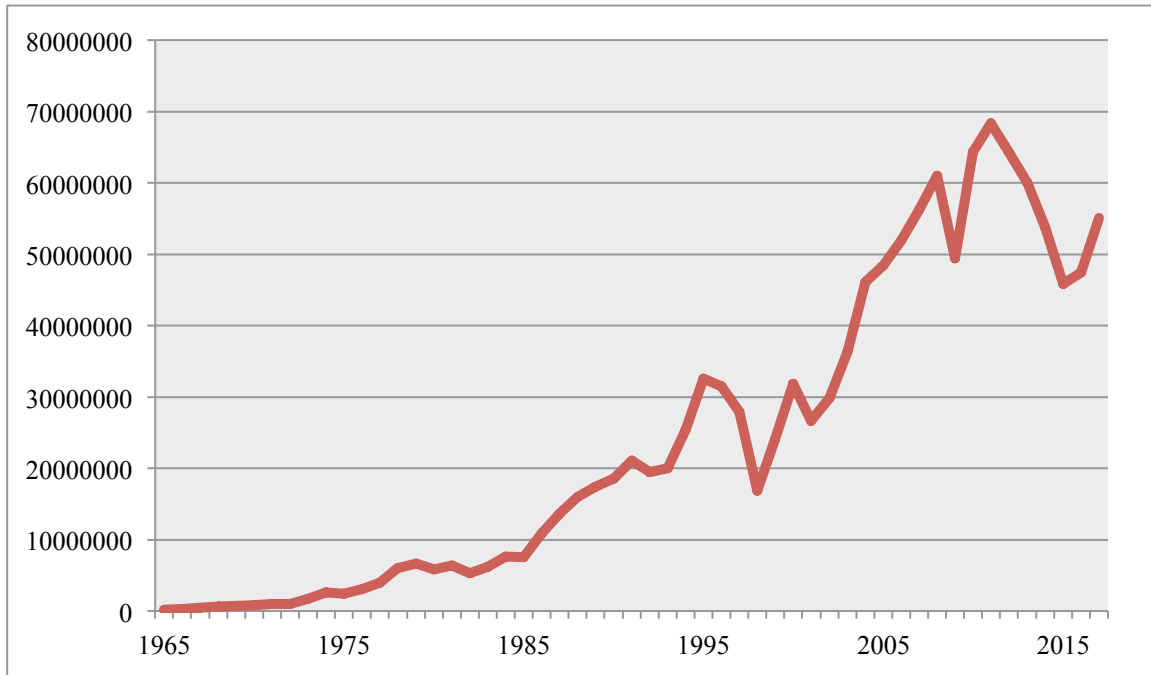


Chart 2: South Korea import from Japan since Japan-South Korea normalization<sup>54</sup>

Chart 2 shows the trend of Korea’s import indicators with Japan, which is similar to its export counterpart. Starting from 1965, South Korea’s import indicator with Japan has drastically gone upward until 1995, and continued to increase despite some downs in 1999, 2000, 2008, and 2013. The most significant drop was the one of the 2012-2016 period, when South Korea’s export indicator to Japan went seriously down by 10 million dollars. Both the slowdown and the decrease in this period partially result of the policies under Park Geun-hye’s presidency in South Korea (started in 2013), which downplayed South Korea’s trade with Japan and encouraged South Korea-China economic cooperation instead. This is also demonstrated in Table 2.

Period	Japan	The United States	China
1965-1974	943,039	653,345	0

<sup>54</sup> Data retrieved from the Korea Statistical Service <http://kosis.kr/statHtml/>

1975-1984	5,307,801	4,751,435	478,581
1985-1994	18,420,664	16,800,487	2,770,839
1995-2004	31,951,642	27,087,810	16,764,948
2005-2014	55,860,438	56,230,491	77,481,406

*Table 2: South Korea average import from Japan, the United States and China after 1965  
(thousand dollars)<sup>55</sup>*

In terms of South Korean imports, Japan had remained the largest origin of the three (Japan, the United States, China) since their normalization until the 1995-2004 period. During the following decade, the United States took the first position and China surpassed Japan as South Korea's second origin of import. Although South Korea's import from Japan remains high, Japan is now the smallest of South Korea's three biggest import destinations.

The examination of these charts and tables leads to a conclusion that the economic interdependence between South Korea and Japan has been increasing in general, but it is not a stable increase. There are fluctuations taking place, especially after 1985. This suggests that there are some factors causing that many downs in Japan-South Korea import and export indicators. One of the most obvious factors, as illustrated in the tables, is the rise of China and the China-South Korea economic cooperation. South Korea's trade with both Japan and China has grown in an absolute term, but in a relative term, it grows with China and declines with Japan. It is a proof of a third party's significant involvement in Japan-South Korea relations, and hence, the Japan-South Korea interdependence is in fact not as strong as neoliberals describe. Another factor is the remaining historical animosity rooted from Japan and South Korea complicated past. As shown in the charts, most of the periods when Japan-South Korea

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<sup>55</sup> Data retrieved from the Korea Statistical Information Service <http://kosis.kr/statHtml/>

trade is marked as “down” are the times when the matters of their memory problems were brought back. A telling example is the period of 2012-2016, when both import and export indicators of South Korea to Japan reduced drastically. 2012 was the year when South Korean President Lee Myung-bak set his foot on the disputed Liancourt Rocks as a proof of Korean claim on the islands. This incident then caused a surge of protest in South Korea, which then severely damage Japan’s image in the South Korean’s views. After that, in 2013, Park Geun-hue was elected as South Korea’s new president. During her incumbency (2013-2016), Park has made it clear that South Korea’s foreign policy would be tilting more toward China than Japan, and raised many issues regarding the comfort women controversy, which includes South Korea’s continuously asking for compensation and “proper” apology from Japan. The distance between Japan and South Korea, as the result, remains large and difficult to bridge. This is where the theory of neoliberalism fails to explain: although the interdependence between Japan and South Korea is going upward through times, it is not the core reason to make the two countries let go of the past.

Economic benefit is not the only thing that brings Japan and South Korea to the same side. It is also the commonly shared problems that make the two former rivals cast aside their historical animosity and sit together to discuss the solution. One of the problems is North Korea’s nuclear development. North Korea has regularly claimed its possession on nuclear weapons and missiles and poses a threat to use these weapons against the United States and its allies. The fourth nuclear test and long-range missile launch at the beginning of 2016 have proven that these threats could be translated into actions at any time. This has called for concern from the United States, Japan and South Korea, and resulted in the three sitting down together to confront the incoming problem. A telling example of this was the Six-party talks about North Korea’s denuclearization, which included North and South Korea, Japan, the

United States, China, and Russia. The threat of North Korean nuclear weapons was particular more worrisome to Japan, South Korea and the United States. That led to the three forming a trilateral partnership inside the six-party talk to support each other.

### ***1.3. The United States' involvement***

The presence of the United States in Japan-South Korea normalization and then cooperation is significant. Without the intervention of the United States, Japan and South Korea would have not reached their current level of cooperation and interdependence. This argument is supported by three reasons.

First, during the 14 years of normalization, the United States made much effort to push Japan and South Korea into the negotiation table. The United States was in need of cooperation from both Japan and South Korea in order to sustain its military operation in the Vietnam War. The 1960 meeting was inarguably a turning point that marked the shift in Japan-South Korea relations from pure hostility to many agreements on compensation, conflict resolution, and reconciliation. The success of this meeting, which led to the signing of the 1965 Korea-Japan Basic Treaty, was achieved thanks to the urging of the United States.

The U.S.-led alliance structure that has implicitly relied on the Tokyo-Seoul cooperation is facing challenges. These challenges include (1) U.S. loss of control over security status in East Asia, (2) the likelihood of regional arms race between its allies, and (3) conflicts over territory, history, and resources<sup>56</sup>. That explains the presence of the United States in almost every cooperation activity that includes Japan and South Korea. For instance, President Obama made efforts to help bring Prime Minister Abe and President Park together, “fostering an environment that made it possible for the two countries to settle their

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<sup>56</sup> Glosserman, B., Snyder, S. (2015). The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States.

grievances.”<sup>57</sup> Obama got the two leaders involved into a trilateral summit meeting on the sideline of the 2014 Nuclear Security Summit in Hague. The TPP and the talks about North Korean nuclear development are also significant examples of the United States’ role. In the case of North Korean problems, the encouragement from the United States has partially and indirectly forced Tokyo and Seoul to see that the problems they were facing are serious enough to distract them from historical disputes. The United States’ purposes to get involved is not only to look after its allies, but also to restrain its rivals and threats (China, as the economic rival in the case of TPP, and North Korea, as the security threat in the case of the denuclearization). However, the United States' efforts in these cases are also to (1) declare that Japan and South Korea belong to the U.S. alliance, and that the United States is well managing conflicts between its allies, and (2) send a message to China that the U.S.-led alliance structure is powerful enough to block China's dominance if it wants.

Third, the United States always appears to be the pacifier whenever a problem takes place between Japan and South Korea. The issues around “comfort women” show the obvious role of the United States as a pacifier in the Japan-South Korea continuous disputes. After the demonstration of South Korean civilians in Seoul asking for more compensation and an appropriate apology from the Japanese government to the South Korean women who claimed to have been forced to serve as sex slaves during the Second World War for the Japanese Army, many other protests were raised among the Korean community all around the world<sup>58</sup>. The protesting movements reached a climax when a statue representing a “comfort woman” was erected in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, which later on resulted in the erection of many versions of this statue in some areas in America, including Virginia, San Francisco,

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<sup>57</sup> Eilperin, J. Agreement on ‘Comfort Women’ Offers Strategic Benefit to U.S. in Asia Pacific, *Washington Post*, January 9, 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Lind, J. (2008). *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics* (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs)



Southern California, and New Jersey<sup>59</sup>. That made it impossible for the United States to stay out of the conflict. On one hand, the United States' local governments where the statues were erected tried to calm down the anger among the Korean community by allowing the statues to remain as "unique art" and "freedom of speech."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, for the sake not to provoke Japan, they associate the actions as a part of the support for the governmental programs against human trafficking and human right abuses in general<sup>61</sup>. That was what Sharon Bulova, the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax, Virginia, where one of the statues was erected, had done to make the actions look like it did not intentionally aim the accusation at the Japanese. On the other hand, the Chairman herself, along with U.S. Congressman Mike Honda - sponsor of 2007 U.S. House of Representatives Resolution 121, also called for Japan, which refused to apologize and insisted that the South Koreans were being overreacting and trying to make money out of the long-gone historical incident, to conduct actions to calm down the fire<sup>62</sup>.

In conclusion, even though the conflicts took place between Japan and South Korea and were rooted in their historical animosity, the United States' shadow has always loomed large as a reminder that Japan and South Korea are allies and that its interests and position in Northeast Asia strongly rely on smooth cooperation between the two.

## **2. The remaining disputes and the legacy of a colonial memory**

Despite the cooperation and interdependence analyzed above, serious issues remain between Japan and South Korea because of their complicated history. This chapter will look into two of the most remarkable disputes, a territorial dispute over the Liancourt Rocks and

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<sup>59</sup> McCarthy, M. (2017). How the Japan-Korea 'Comfort Women' Debate Plays out in the US

<sup>60</sup> Taylor, Adams. (2017). Why Japan is losing its battle against statues of colonial-era 'comfort women'

<sup>61</sup> Kingston, J. (2017). 'Comfort women' in South Korea who serviced U.S. forces seek justice

<sup>62</sup> McCarthy, M. (2014). US comfort women memorials: vehicles for understanding and change

Japanese Prime Ministers' visits to The Yasukuni shrine, to demonstrate the effects of historical animosity in the two countries' relations.

## ***2.1. Liancourt Rocks***

The Liancourt Rocks, as known as Takeshima to the Japanese and Dokdo to the South Koreans, is a cluster of rocks that lie in the sea between Japan and South Korea and has been under dispute between the two countries. Each country has its own basis and reasons to claim sovereignty over the islands.

### *2.1.1. Japan's claims*

In February 2008, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented a ten-point propaganda containing ten reasons why Japan has the rightful claims on the Liancourt Rocks. To be more precise, there are eight points in the brochure that focus mostly on past events concerning Japan and its territorial claim over the islets, and two points that discuss Japan's proposal to ICJ in 1954, 1962 and 2012, which was rejected later by the ROK.

The propaganda's first eight points are about Japan's ownership of the Liancourt Rocks since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which stated that Japan had long recognized the existence of the islets and taken advantages of it. To support their arguments, several maps and documents were presented as the evidence for Japan's recognition of the location of today's Takeshima and Utsuryo islands. They include permission for passage in Tottori, showing that the Japanese citizens had been using the islets as the navigational port, docking ship points, and fishing ground under the reign of the Edo-period Shogun. In addition, other incidents, including Japan's cabinet claim to the sovereignty of the Liancourt Rocks in 1905 and Japan-U.S. approval of using the islets for bombing practices in 1951, are shown as evidence that Japan has the rightful claim to the area.

The remaining two points are both relating to the legitimacy of Japan and South Korea's sovereignty over the Liancourt Rocks. One of them concentrates on the ROK's 1952 establishment of "Peace Line" indicating that the Liancourt Rocks as a part of its territory. Japan argues that this unilateral action is against international law and constitutes an illegal occupation. Japan also accuses South Korea of its rejection of Japan's proposals to settle this dispute at the ICJ. In the view of Japan, this rejection is proof of South Korea's lack of confidence and a sign of a weaker claim. South Korea, to its defense, states that it is unnecessary to bring the case to the court, as the Liancourt Rocks has already and always been a part of its territory and the islets is not a matter of international negotiations or judicial settlement.

### *2.1.2 South Korea's claims*

According to Sean Fern, "[t]he South Korean claim to Tokdo (the name of the Liancourt Rocks in Korean) is based on earlier, more numerous precedents than that of Japan." It is proven by various historical records, including maps and documents showing that the islets "was first incorporated into the Korean Shilla Dynasty in 512 A.D.<sup>63</sup>" Additionally, South Korea presented a plenty of maps drawn by the Japanese serving as proof of Japan's historical acknowledgement of Korea's possession of the islets. One notable example is the map of Sekisui Nagakubo<sup>64</sup> provided also by the Japanese as its historical evidence. South Korea states that the island was not colored as the other parts of Japan's territory. Furthermore, South Korea points out a note written next to the Liancourt Rocks' position on the map stating that Japan's outermost spot was Oki Island, which contradicts Japan's claim over The Liancourt Rocks.

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<sup>63</sup> Fern, S. (2005). Tokdo or Takeshima: The International Law of Territorial Acquisition in the Japan-Korea Island Dispute.

<sup>64</sup> in the Complete Map of Japanese Lands and Roads

In addition, South Korea's claims are fortified by their people and government's continuing presence and administration on the Liancourt Rocks. In 1965, a Korean fisherman settled on the islets and earned his living there. His family continues their residence status, and after that more Koreans came to reside. The government has also intervened by building lighthouse and harbor facilities and sending police and officials to guard the islets. Since 1996, the Liancourt Rocks has been considered as one of South Korea's tourist attractions. Koreans and foreign tourists are allowed to visit the Liancourt Rocks by the South Korean government, and the islets have been continuously introduced as a part of South Korea's territory. President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea during his presidency also wrote a message to his people reaffirming South Korea's right to assert sovereignty on the islands. The message directly started with the statement that Dokdo belongs to Korea, and the islands "is not merely a piece of [their] land but one that carries historic significance as a clear testament to [their] forty years of affliction" as it was the first land to be annexed by the Japanese<sup>65</sup>.

### *2.1.3. The dispute in agenda and in reality*

#### *a. Governments' agenda of avoidance*

The dispute over Takeshima/Dokdo is a sensitive problem. While South Korea mostly remains silent insisting only as needed that its claim over the islands is an undisputable matter<sup>66</sup>, Japan also tries not to bring up the topic in negotiations to avoid stirring up the irrelevant issue<sup>67</sup>. Two incidents led them to this mutual avoidance of the issue, at least throughout the 1970s and 1980s until the 1996 designation of Takeshima Day by Shimane Prefecture that reignited the issue. The first one was Japan's mentioning of the territorial dispute in its secondary school textbooks in 2008, which was accused by the South Koreans of

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<sup>65</sup> Roh, M. (2006). Special Message by President Roh Moo-hyun on Korea-Japan Relations.

<sup>66</sup> Chung, M. (2012). Seoul to keep Dokdo out of court.

<sup>67</sup> The Japan Times. (2012). Strain on Tokyo-Seoul ties.

sugarcoating and fabricating of history. This resulted in a protest in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul and South Korea's rejection of Japan's offer of a bilateral meeting on the sideline of the ASEAN regional security summit in Singapore<sup>68</sup>. The Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan was afraid that the tension would escalate into military actions, which "would bring no benefit to either Japan or South Korea"<sup>69</sup>. The second incident was that the United States decided to get involved into the dispute by claiming "Liancourt Rocks" as the only official name of the islands, and confirming their neutral position in the dispute<sup>70</sup>. The response from the United States made Japan and South Korea - who were as eager as the United States to see the tension eased - step back from fighting. Since then, both the Japanese and the South Korean governments have tried to avoid having this issue on their agenda in negotiation. However, in reality, provocative actions still take place from both sides.

b. Provocative actions in reality

The story begins with South Korea's efforts to change the status quo and reaffirming its claim on the Liancourt Rocks by investing more in infrastructure, building a lighthouse, and sending soldiers to the islands as a sign of protecting its territory. In addition, in 2012, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak paid a visit to the islands and became the first South Korean leader ever to set foot on the disputed land<sup>71</sup>. The purpose of his visit remains debatable. One argument is that it helped him make a historical stand. The South Koreans have believed that their claim on Dokdo is a symbol of South Korea's freedom from the Japanese colonization, and their president's presence on the islands reaffirm the belief. Another argument is that the visit was to improve President Lee's image in South Korea. Regarding the

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<sup>68</sup> Kubota, Y. et. al. (2008). Japan calls for calm in S. Korea island dispute.

<sup>69</sup> Machimura, N. (2008). Interview at press conference in Tokyo.

<sup>70</sup> Gallegos, G. Interview in Press Conference, Washington DC, July 28, 2008

<sup>71</sup> Ser, M. (2012). Lee Myung-bak makes historic visit to Dokdo.

corruption scandals he was facing at that time<sup>72</sup>, the visit seemed to be a good way to strengthen his people's confidence in him. Both arguments, however, failed to notice an important point: South Korea at that time was on its way to enhance harmonious bilateral relations with Japan. Visiting the disputed islands is equal to betraying Korea's long-held policy of avoiding diplomatic disputes over Dokdo<sup>73</sup>. After the visit, President Lee received criticisms from Japan. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda described the visit as "completely unacceptable" because it was "contrary to [Japanese] nation's stance that Takeshima is historically - and under international law - an integral part of [their] national territory." The Prime Minister also emphasized that this was a wrong move at the time the two governments were trying to "push for a positive future between Japan and South Korea<sup>74</sup>."

Nevertheless, the story does not end with the blame on only South Korea. Japan has also conducted provocative actions around the disputed islands. One telling example was the Japanese government's approval for the Shimane Prefecture to celebrate "Takeshima Day" in February. Despite serious warnings from South Korea, the celebration has been held annually since 2005<sup>75</sup>. In addition, to mark Japan's claim on the islands, the Japanese government representatives sometimes participated in these festivals<sup>76</sup>. This, consequently, received strong objections from the South Koreans, expressed by the demonstrations in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. In addition, after the Japanese celebration on February 2013, Cho Tai-young, South Korea's Spokesperson and Deputy Minister for Public Relations, expressed the concern and regret on behalf of the government for the fact that Japanese government still lets the event go on despite South Korea's strong demand for its cancellation. He also warned that

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<sup>72</sup> Mundy, S. (2012). South Korea's President Lee Myung-bak apologizes for corruption scandal.

<sup>73</sup> Kim, H. (2012). Lee Myung Bak's stunt over disputed islands.

<sup>74</sup> Oi, M. (2012). South Korea's Lee Myung-bak visits disputed islands.

<sup>75</sup> Ryall, J. (2013). Japan angers Korea by marking Takeshima Day.

<sup>76</sup> Koh, Y. (2011). DPJ Attends 'Takeshima Day' for the First Time.

a more severe damage in the two countries' relations would be inevitable if Japan did not stop this action<sup>77</sup>. Another action from Japan that fueled the dispute was the authorization of Japanese high school textbooks, which defined the Liancourt Rocks as part of the Japanese territory. Cho Sei-young, Director-General for Northeast Asian Affairs, indicated that students would be misinformed by the “wrongful historical perceptions” in the book, and this could consequently damage the Japan-South Korea relations in the future<sup>78</sup>.

## ***2.2. Yasukuni shrine***

The Yasukuni shrine is a Japanese Shinto shrine located in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo, the economic and trade center of Japan. The shrine was founded in 1868 by Emperor Meiji with the initial purpose to worship the war heroes who sacrificed their lives serving the Emperor. Later on, the purpose has been expanded to commemorate all soldiers who died in service of the country during all the wars that Japan got involved spanning from the entire Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods. Yasukuni used to be considered as a sacred place in Japan where people come to pray for the soul of the heroes until the enshrinement of 14 convicted Class-A war criminals from the Second World War in 1978. This angered the South Koreans and the Chinese, who were Japan's major victims during its imperial colonization. The continuous visits of Japanese prime ministers (PM) Nakasone, Koizumi, and Abe fuel the long-lasting hatred that the South Koreans have been holding against Japan.

### *2.2.1. The controversial visits of Japanese PM(s)*

Prime Minister Koizumi's multiple visits caused the largest surge of protest and severely affected the bilateral relations between Japan and South Korea. Not only did he come to pray at the controversial shrine annually for six years (2001, 2002, 20003, 20004, 20005,

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<sup>77</sup> Press Briefing: Spokesperson and Deputy Minister for Public Relations Cho Tai-young Feb. 21, 2013.

<sup>78</sup> Press release: Director-General for Northeast Asian Affairs Summons a Japanese Diplomat over the Textbook Issue, the Republic of Korea MOFA, March 27, 2013.

and 2006), but also made his every visit visible to the public. Even the United States felt the urge to get involved and stop Koizumi's actions. Both representatives of the United States Republican and Democratic Parties, Henry Hyde and Tom Lantos, condemned Koizumi's visits as an act "morally bankrupt" and "unworthy for a great nation as Japan"<sup>79</sup> and threatened to forbid him from giving a speech at the Capitol if he did not stop<sup>80</sup>. To his defense, Koizumi claimed that he did not come to the shrine as an important politician, but as a citizen of Japan who just prays for peace and tranquillity. Moreover, he indicated that this visit meant no ill will or humiliation towards South Korea and China because their relations with Japan remained the top priority of his political strategy<sup>81</sup>. His excuses, predictably, were not accepted, due to the constant presence of cameras and media around his every visit and the fact that he always signed himself as the PM in the visitor's book. His neglect of China and South Korea contradicted his message of prioritizing Japan's relations with East Asian countries.

Koizumi's successor, Shinzo Abe, on the other hand, did not visit the shrine himself during his very short first term. In his second terms, however, there are a lot to discuss Abe's diplomatic movement regarding the Yasukuni issue. On the surface, it seemed as if he was taking a careful diplomatic step by trying not to provoke Japan's neighbors. He stated at a news Conference in December 2013:

It is natural that we should express our feelings of respect to the war dead that sacrificed their lives for the nation. But it is my thinking that we should avoid making political and diplomatic issues.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Nakata, H. (2006). Bid to address Congress has Yasukuni proviso.

<sup>80</sup> China Daily. (2006). US lawmakers urge post-Koizumi leader not to visit war Shrine.

<sup>81</sup> Basic Position of the Government of Japan Regarding Prime Minister Koizumi's Visits to Yasukuni shrine, Japanese MOFA, October 2005.

<sup>82</sup> Abe's speech at News Conference, December 9, 2013. Reported by 毎日新聞 December 25, 2013.



The statement looks like Abe was conveying a message that he was fully aware of the Yasukuni as a matter of political issue and diplomatic strategy. Nevertheless, when putting into context, this statement appears to suggest that the criticism on “making political and diplomatic issues” was meant to aim at China and Korea’s irrational protests against a harmless domestic action of Japan. In other words, what Abe was criticizing was not his successors’ visit to the shrine as a harmful action to Japan’s relations with South Korea and China, but more likely China and South Korea’s reactions towards the visits. Regarding the fact that Abe was determined to pay a visit to the shrine during his first incumbency and regretted not to do that, and his public pledge to do so in the next term as PM, it is accurate to interpret his statement this way.

It started with the PM’s offers to ritual celebrations on behalf of him to the shrine for the festivals in April and October 2013, the anniversary of the end of World War II in August 2013, in lieu of his actual presence, and eventually, his official visit as a PM to the shrine at the end of December 2013, several days after making his speech at the News Conference. His excuse for still paying a visit to this controversial place is that his one and only purpose is for praying for peace and make a vow that Japan will never raise war again<sup>83</sup>. However, Abe’s reasons this time is not much different from which of Koizumi years earlier. The reactions towards Abe’s visit, predictably, were not positive.

### *2.2.2. Protest in South Korea*

Abe’s visit brought a massive surge of protest in Korea. The visit served as an unforgivable action of humiliating Korea’s miserable past and glorifying Japan’s cruelty against peace. Unlike China, however, South Korea did not call out vigorous actions. The government reactions were mainly shown through the official papers released by the Ministry

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<sup>83</sup> Statement by Prime Minister Abe - Pledge for everlasting peace, December 26, 2013

of Foreign Affairs. All of the reportedly 91 of Foreign Ministry spokesperson's commentaries on the Japanese PM's visits to the Yasukuni shrine<sup>84</sup>, strictly follow the same format. Starting with the South Korean government's direct expression of deep anger, disappointment, regret, and concern towards the visits, the commentaries present by a call for Japan's immediate stop of this action and appropriate apology, and concludes with a warning about severe deterioration in the two countries' relations if Japan takes no action.

After Abe's visit to the shrine in 2013, South Korea decided to bring the case to the United Nation<sup>85</sup>. This marked a turning point in South Korea's objection in the Yasukuni case: before that, despite the fact that a huge amount of exchanged statements between them, the problem remained bilateral between Japan and South Korea. This time, the involvement of the UN and other countries suggested a sign of South Korea calling for international intervention, making the Yasukuni controversy not only a Japan-South Korea bilateral diplomatic and political issue.

### ***2.3. Brief conclusion***

The two cases above have shown the effects of colonial memory on Japan-South Korea relations. In the case of the Liancourt Rocks dispute, the islands represent the Koreans' freedom from the Japanese colonization and the Japanese loss of pride in losing part of their territory. This leads to a vicious cycle of one's continuous efforts to claim its sovereignty on this cluster of rocks and the other's strong reactions. Similarly, Japanese PMs' visits to the Yasukuni shrine rubs salt into the South Korean wounds of colonial memory. In conclusion, despite the presence of cooperation and interdependence, historical issues and memory problems remain unsolved between Japan and South Korea.

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<sup>84</sup> Press count by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea.

<sup>85</sup> Statement by Ambassador Oh Joon - Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations Security Council, Open Debate on War, its Lessons, and the Search for a Permanent Peace, 29 January 2014, New York.

### **3. The shift in South Korean memory interpretation**

The first two chapters have brought up a question: why Japan and South Korea still hate each other? According to the theory of neoliberalism shown in the first chapter, the economic interdependence, cooperation, alliance with the United States and mutual concerns and interests must have made Japan and South Korea allies. However, as chapter two has shown, severe problems remain between them, and these conflicts are rooted in their complicated history. The legacy of the colonial era remains a stark barrier to full reconciliation between Japan and South Korea, despite their relatively well-built interdependence.

This chapter will pay attention to the role and intervention of China which affect either deterioration or amelioration of the relations between Japan and South Korea. Precisely, the subject of discussion will be South Korea foreign policies with Japan and China under the presidency of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye, and how these policies have affected memory interpretation among the Koreans. These effects will be examined in accordance with the theory of constructivism.

#### ***3.1. Lee Myung-bak's foreign policies regarding China and Japan***

##### ***3.1.1. China***

Before analyzing Lee's foreign policies regarding China, it is necessary to skim through the South Korea-China relations under his predecessor - Roh Moo-hyun. During Roh's presidency, China enjoyed harmonious relations with South Korea based on Roh's three significations: (1) the inter-Korean reconciliation, which involved China as North Korea's partner, (2) the importance of regional cooperation and stability, which necessarily include China as an East Asian major power, and (3) the desire for greater independence within the

U.S.-ROK alliance, which was interpreted as a chance for China to intervene and drag South Korea closer to its side<sup>86</sup>.

Lee's foreign policy, however, has snatched the enjoyment from China, although during his terms, the China-South Korea relations may appear to be going upward. In May 2008, Lee paid the first visit to Beijing as President of the Republic of Korea. Here he had a talk with Chinese President Hua Jin Tao, regarding the matter of further developing friendly relations and cooperation<sup>87</sup>. At the end of the talk, they had concluded to upgrade the China-South Korea mere "partnership" to the higher level of a "strategic cooperative partnership" viewing South Korea among China's most important trade partners. Three months later, Hua had another meeting with Lee in Seoul, in which they discussed China and South Korea's mutual concerns and interests, including political mutual trust, bilateral economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, and regional affairs<sup>88</sup>. These meetings serve as the demonstrations of China and South Korea's expectation for a better cooperation. For China, the focus is to break South Korea off the alliance with the United States and pull it closer to China. For South Korea, Lee Myung-bak precisely, the focus lies in South Korea's economic opportunity and the chance to advocate inter-Korea reunification, as China remains North Korea's only trustworthy ally. Despite all that, the priority of Lee and his top advisers was to strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance.

This, as the result, put South Korea in a hard position "between ally and partner." Jae Ho Chung described the situation as South Korea was "a shrimp" trying to survive and keep up with "the whales." The biggest problem at that time was the U.S.-China rivalry, and South Korea's incapability of solving it. In other words, what Lee Myung-bak was facing is a risk of

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<sup>86</sup> Snyder, S. (2009). Lee Myung-bak's Foreign Policy: A 250-Day Assessment.

<sup>87</sup> China-ROK Joint Statement. Beijing, May 28, 2008.

<sup>88</sup> China-ROK Joint Communiqué. Seoul, August 25, 2008.

losing trust from the United States for being close to China. As someone who prioritized South Korea's strategic alliance with the United States, Lee did not take that risk. Instead, he chose to lessen interactions with China, focused on solving current problems with Japan, and intended to build up a future-oriented relation with the Japanese.

### *3.1.2. Japan*

Lee's emphasis on promoting U.S.-ROK alliance made South Korea foreign policies tilt more toward Japan, as Japan is another key ally of the United States in Northeast Asia. During the early days of his election, Lee had signalled his willingness to develop a more stable and harmonious future with Japan, based on their common values as fellow democracies<sup>89</sup>. This is not the first effort of South Korean leaders to set aside the frustrating past with Japan and move forward to a cooperative future. His predecessors Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun had similar aims. In 1998, Kim forged a public announcement with Japanese PM Keizo Obuchi about their desire for a future-oriented South Korea-Japan relation. However, by the end of his term, PM Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni shrine and the textbook controversy of Japan strengthened the anti-Japanese sentiments in South Korea and overthrew the most of Kim achievements in South Korea reconciliation with Japan. In 2003, Roh Moo-hyun, similarly, started his presidency with an effort to persuade Koizumi to stop his visits for the sake of Japan-South Korea relations but ended up calling for a "diplomatic war" against Japan over the Yasukuni visits, textbook, and the Liancourt Rocks dispute. It was a challenge for Lee Myung-bak to not follow the same steps. In 2008, during the first months of his incumbency, Lee Myung-bak paid a cordial visit with Japanese PM Yasuo Fukuda. They set up a positive future-oriented outcome, within which both countries put aside their historical dispute and focus on economic cooperation. However, the Japan textbook controversy broke

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<sup>89</sup> Yonhap. (2008). S. Korea, Japan likely to resume shuttle diplomacy.

out in July 2008 - right in the first year of Lee's presidency. This once again brought back the colonial legacy between two countries, creating a sense of anti-Japanese among the South Koreans, which reduced Lee's public image domestically. As the result, his vision of a warm, future-oriented relation with Japan was severely challenged<sup>90</sup>.

Along with historical issues, structural barriers in the regional context were another obstacle for the efforts to promote diplomatic ties and economic partnership<sup>91</sup>. In 2008, Lee and Fukuda, however, had tried to overcome this by forging a trilateral dialogue with the United States. The dialogue's focuses were not limited issues regarding the Korean peninsula, but expanded on a broader range of global issues, in accordance with their prior trilateral coordination efforts<sup>92</sup>. By using the United States as a bridge and mutual interests as a priority, Lee had managed to keep Japan-South Korea friendship. In addition, within the trilateral China-Japan-South Korea Summit Meeting in December 2008, Lee and Fukuda once again had the opportunity to talk together for the sake of a strengthened Japan-South Korea relation. Their discussion had reached to several positive outcomes, including the increase in Japan-South Korea import and export, and the open up of the South Korean entertainment industry to the Japanese market.

Still, Lee did not avoid making the wrong steps of his predecessors. In 2012, his visit to the Liancourt Rocks as the first South Korean leaders had thrown a firebomb in his efforts to bring South Korea closer to Japan. As mentioned before, even though the points of his trip remained debatable, it was strictly contradictory with Lee's objectives during the first years of his term and had cost a chance to reconcile historical problems with Japan. As the result, Lee

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<sup>90</sup> Snyder, S. (2009). Lee Myung-bak's Foreign Policy: A 250-Day Assessment

<sup>91</sup> Snyder, S. (2008). Lee Myung-bak Era: Mixed Picture for China Relations.

<sup>92</sup> Joint Japan-ROK Leaders' Press Conference. April 21, 2008

had received criticisms from Japan, and the relation between the two countries was pushed to the brink of a collapse.

### ***3.2. Park Geun-hye's foreign policies regarding China and Japan***

While Lee Myung-bak's focus in Asia stays strictly in Japan-South Korea reconciliation and future-oriented interdependence, Park Geun-hye seems to have a contradictive strategy. It was proven by her continuous foreign policies favoring China over Japan during her presidency.

#### *3.2.1. China*

Before becoming president, Park's actions already suggested her intention to forge strong relations with China. Starting with her role as South Korean envoy to China under the rule of Lee Myung-bak which ended up upgrading South Korea's relations with China in terms of economic cooperation, Park's interactions with her Chinese counterparts, such as showing the willingness to work together in their mutual historical and territorial disputes with Japan, North Korean nuclear problems, and the inter-Korean reconciliation, served as evidence for her future strategies regarding China.

The election of Park Geun-hye in December 2013 is described by Snyder and Byun as an event that will give a remarkable boost to the Sino-Korea relations<sup>93</sup>. China under the rule of President Xi Jinping had maintained both its friendship with North Korea (on the matter of aids and as Communist fellows) and its coordination with South Korea (on the matter of regional stability). In other words, a close relation with China was equal to a better communication with North Korea, thus a better chance to discuss the matter of denuclearization and further an opportunity for the two Koreas to work on their reunification.

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<sup>93</sup> Byun, S. Snyder, S. (2013). China-Korea relations: under new leadership. In *Comparative Connection: A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations*.

South Korean President Park saw these potentials and designed her foreign policies based on them.

On December 19, 2012, one day after Park's victory, the president-elected Park Geun-hye held a meeting with ambassadors from various countries discussing South Korea's future strategies. She had a talk with The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson in the meeting, who greeted her with hopes for a cooperative Sino-Korea future based on "strategic and political mutual trust."<sup>94</sup> She also showed her interest in exchanging her first envoys with China<sup>95</sup>. The leadership transition from Lee Myung-bak to Park Geun-hye appeared to be an opportunity to improve South Korea's tie with China from the legacy of Lee's reluctance to boost Sino-ROK relations<sup>96</sup>. Although South Korea's conservative rule remained for another five years, Park had put economic recovery and inter-Korean reunification as priorities, thus enhanced relations with China. However, this did not mean that Park was giving up the alliance with the United States in exchange for the cooperation with China, but rather that she emphasized the importance of China in South Korea's future. This, as the result, put Park in the same case as her predecessor. Nonetheless, unlike Lee's avoidance of working together with China and paying more attention to the U.S.-ROK alliance, Park saw no reason to cast China aside. Her way of dealing with China resembled what Jae Ho Chung described South Korea's balancing policy between China and the United States. Precisely, Park focused on ten strategies: preventive war, distancing, hedging, neutrality, self-help, bandwagoning, binding, engagement, containment, and issue-based support, with major attention paid to a hybrid of the last three strategies<sup>97</sup>. Precisely, what Park was trying to do were (1) getting South Korea

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<sup>94</sup> *ibid*

<sup>95</sup> Kim, O. (2013). Park Geun-hye will send first special envoys to China.

<sup>96</sup> Snyder, S. (2013). A New Opportunity for China-South Korea Relations Under Park Geun-hye and Xi Jinping?

<sup>97</sup> Chung (2006). Korea and China in Northeast Asia: From the Stable Bifurcation to the Complicated Interdependence. *Korea at the Center: Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia*, 202-203.



involved into actions including both the United States and China, while simultaneously (2) containing the rivalry of the two major powers as much as possible and (3) helping both in dealing with their issues<sup>98</sup>.

### 3.2.2. *Japan*

Since she was running for president in 2012, Park has shown a consistent anti-Japanese attitude. On the matter of Dokdo/Takeshima, she had repeatedly made it clear that (1) Japan was the one who is completely clueless of historical facts regarding the sovereignty over the islands<sup>99</sup>, (2) it is undeniable that Dokdo belongs to South Korea “in the light of history, geography, and international law<sup>100</sup>, and (3) it is Japan’s stubbornness that hinders Japan-South Korea economic and security cooperation, culture exchange, and diplomatic relations, and damages their future as strategic partners<sup>101</sup>. On the matter of comfort women, she (1) reminded the importance for the Japanese to understand history correctly<sup>102</sup>, (2) implied that the Japanese are sugarcoating their crimes during the colonization era and refusing to take responsibility<sup>103</sup>, and (3) keep asking for compensation from Japan<sup>104</sup>. On the matter of Japanese Prime Minister visits to Yasukuni shrine, Park again emphasized that it is Japan’s responsibility to “look at history directly and honestly” and “positively pursue changes and act responsively.”<sup>105</sup>

During Park’s presidency, more and more policies against Japan had been implemented by the government, the legal community, and government sectors. One notable

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<sup>98</sup> Chung (2007). *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China relations and the United States*.

<sup>99</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea. Press interview on August 20, 2012.

<sup>100</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea. Interview with South Korean press, September 14, 2012.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid*

<sup>102</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea. Presidential candidates debate on TV, December 4, 2012.

<sup>103</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea. Interview with a foreign correspondent in Seoul, November 8, 2012)

<sup>104</sup> *ibid*

<sup>105</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea. Government ceremony commemorating Independence Movements, March 1, 2013.

point is that all of these actions were more or less relevant to Japan-South Korea long-lasting historical problems. Some debatable minor actions includes the South Korean High Court's decision to refuse Japan's request for extradition of a criminal who set fire on Yasukuni shrine imprisoned in Seoul<sup>106</sup> and the refusal to return Japanese statues stolen from Nagasaki to Daejun, as the statues was defined as Korean's original artifacts that Japanese soldiers stole to Japan during their colonization. More serious actions in larger scale include South Korea and China's refusal to take part in the ASEAN+3 meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors on May 3, 2013, in protest of Japan's presence, and the ban from South Korean government bank on imports to eight Japanese prefectures. These actions were encouraged by the President, thus they were the evidence of her reluctance to improve South Korea's relations with Japan. Park Geun-hye herself as the incumbent president of South Korea, also, had conducted offensive actions that aimed directly at Japan. Most of them appear in the form of harsh speech accusing Japan, such as her inauguration speech which repeatedly pointing out that "the historical situation facing the assailants and their victims will never change even if 1000 years past,"<sup>107</sup> her talk at the U.S. Congress claiming Japan being "blind to history",<sup>108</sup> her warning about a worsened future during a meeting with German chancellor if Japan does not "stop rubbing salt on the wound of history" and "start making effort to heal them."<sup>109</sup>

### ***3.3. The shift in memory interpretation***

Despite the uprising and protests against Japanese textbook controversy and the Liancourt Rocks dispute, Lee's efforts during his first years as South Korean president had positive effects on how the South Koreans look at Japan. Precisely, the Korean perception of

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<sup>106</sup> The Korean News. South Korea repatriates Chinese arsonist instead of extraditing to Japan.

<sup>107</sup> The Japan Times. Park urges Japan to reflect on past aggression.

<sup>108</sup> Yonhap news. Full text of Park's speech at U.S. Congress.

<sup>109</sup> Williamson, L. (2013). South Korea President Park: 'No purpose' to Japan talks.

Japan is becoming more multi-faceted, allowing some positive assessments of Japan to take place.

The year of 2008 marked a critical time for South Korea entertainment industry, as the effects of “Hallyu” had stretched out of its border. “Hallyu” is the word for special interests in South Korean culture, specifically South Korean music, dramas, and TV shows. Japan is considered the largest and most potential market for Hallyu. This is a sign of a shift in memory interpretation. Before that, as mentioned above, the ideology of *Japanese being the inferior, Korean are superior* made the South Koreans look down on Japan. However, the Japanese audience was now among as the most fastidious and valuable target for South Korean stars. In other words, any South Korean stars who can satisfy the “high taste” of Japanese is considered as very successful and talented.

The effects of Hallyu on Japanese people are remarkable also because they are the evidence of Japan-South Korea cultural exchange in many generations and on daily basis. This, in return, gives the Japanese the chance to look at many facets of South Korea and its people. To the Japanese youth, there is a Korean street in Shinjuku - one of the busiest and most populated areas in Tokyo - where Japanese people (mostly high school students) stand hours in line just to get a grip on the albums or pictures of their favorite Korean celebrities and the delicious Korean-styled street food. To the elder people in every class of Japan, South Korean dramas appear to be an inevitable part of their lives, due to the fact that these films are understandable, not too complicated, and easy to follow. To the Japanese women, especially high school and university students, the Korean-styled make up is popular, because they look appealing, attractive, and match for the Japanese standard of “beauty.” Go Ito, Professor of International Relations in Department of Political Science of Meiji University, assessed that this spread of favor toward Korean’s products in Japan can serve as a kick-start for the

reconciliation. According to him, the increased appetite of Japanese people for South Korean music, movies, and style can serve as a foundation for the theories of constructivism to be built upon<sup>110</sup>.

In return, Japanese culture has also reached a relatively equal position in South Korea. The South Koreans have stopped seeing Japanese as the brutal, unsophisticated barbarians and started exploring many facets of the Japanese culture they never looked at before. The most notable is the spread of Japanese animations (anime) and comics (manga) among the South Korean youths since the lifting of the ban against importing Japanese cultural products. The style of Japanese comics and animations has been an inspiration for many South Korean famous artists. This is exemplified by the number of Japanese-styled comics on Webtoon - a very famous comic website for South Korean comic artists. Some of the most popular South Korean artists that got inspired by Japanese styles are Son Jeho & Lee Kwangsoo - the authors of the famous comic Nobless that attracted millions of readers<sup>111</sup>, and Lee Jong-hui with his famous comic Tower of God, which has been published in South Korea, Japan, China, the United States, and adapted into a movie displayed all over the world<sup>112</sup>. Although Japanese culture does not affect the older generations in South Korea the way South Korean dramas do to their Japanese counterpart, it is safe to say that Japanese culture has become a part of many South Korean people's lives, especially the youths.

Obviously, the credit of that did not only go to Lee Myung-bak or any of his predecessor in particular. The shift in memory interpretation is the result of a long effort in the reconciliation of many. Still, Lee's endeavor to discuss with Japanese leaders during his

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<sup>110</sup> Go Ito, personal interview, February 10, 2018, Tokyo.

<sup>111</sup> Popularity on Naver Webtoons

<sup>112</sup> Gustines, G. (2017). Stan Lee and Michelle Phan Help Line Webtoon, Digital Comics Site, Expand in U.S.

presidency did contribute remarkably, proven by the official landing of the South Korean entertainment industry in Japan in 2008.

This multi-faceted image of Japan in South Koreans' perception and the many aspects of cultural exchange have remained during the Park Geun-hye era and afterwards, despite Park's policies of condemning Japan and favoring China. The reason is simple: once people are exposed to a new idea or an aspect of culture, the effects it has on them never fade away. However, Park's era was the time when problems regarding the colonial memory were brought back into official discussions, as the result of her continuous public accusation against Japan of the South Koreans' sufferings during the wartime. The shift in memory interpretation, therefore, was an unavoidable outcome.

The first thing needs to mention about the difference in memory interpretation is the increase of the protest against the comfort women issue. According to the record of South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during Lee Myung-bak era, only 4 official statements and issues proposed regarding the case were released, and 2 of them were about Lee and Fukuda's conversation in reaching to agreements<sup>113</sup>. Meanwhile, during the Park Geun-hye era, the number of these documents was three times higher, with only 3 of them mentioning Park and Abe dealing with the problem in the last year of her presidency. The rest were South Korean government condemning their Japanese counterpart to the international community (e.g. Statement by Amb Oh Joon at UNSC Open Debate) and requesting for compensation<sup>114</sup>.

The protest, nonetheless, did not stop at the governmental level. During the 2013-2016 period - Park's incumbency - the number of public protests among South Korean people was remarkable. There was not only the annual protest in front of the Japanese Embassy, but also various demonstrations taking place on the street, where the South Korean repeated what their

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<sup>113</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea. Policy Information.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid*

president said about Japan. Japanese image in the South Koreans, despite the legacy of Lee Myung-bak's open up era, appeared to be worsened. The South Korean still accept other aspects of Japanese culture and have a multi-faceted perspective about Japan, but they were reminded that there was another "Japan" exist. This "Japan" was frequently described by their president as a cruel nation responsible for their people's sufferings in wartime, their humiliation of being a colony, and their loss of rights and freedom. In other words, the negative image of an evil militarist Japan, which once paved the way for a more positive and multifaceted one, was brought back into the South Koreans' mind through Park Geun-hye's policies against Japan.

In addition, the presence of China is significant when analyzing South Korean's memory. Even before Park Geun-hye and her policies that boost up the Sino-ROK relations, in terms of culture and ideology, China and South Korea already have many reasons to tilt toward each other. They share a similar history. Their bonds were formed since ancient time when the Korean dynasty served as a vassal of the Emperor of China. Their societies have been built based on the same ideology of Confucianism, which focuses on the relationships of individuals with their family members, their leaders or followers, and other people. Most importantly, they have shared the same memory about the dark times under the rule of the Japanese imperial.

The aforementioned protests serve as the foundation on which the friendship of China and South Korea grows. During the Second World War, both countries were fully or partially colonized and their people were enslaved by the Japanese imperialism. The proverb of "Enemies of the enemy are friends" seems to apply very well in the case of South Korea and China. In the contemporary era, they share the ongoing issues originated from their miserable past with Japan. Every time a Japanese Prime Minister set his foot on the Yasukuni shrine,

there were surges of protest in South Korea and China. Every time the issue of “comfort women” during wartime was brought up, there were demonstrations among the South Korean and Chinese communities all around the world urging a proper apology and compensations from the Japanese government. Every time territorial disputes with Japan were brought into discussion, the Chinese remember Diaoyu and the South Koreans recall the name Dokdo as a part of their land that has been snatched away by the Japanese. These incidents have shown that, even though South Korea and China are having problems with each other, on the matter of Japan and their crime in the past, they have found a common voice.

As the increase of interactions between the two countries has facilitated the sharing of cultures and ideas, it is possible for the current enmity to soften. However, the bad image of Japan remains stark and strong in South Koreans memory. The real question is whether the South Koreans are ready to be open up to the aforementioned taboos at the scale of daily conversation. Unlike the Japanese who views their historical animosity as political and diplomatic issues, to the South Korean, the memory of the colonial past is something further than just a matter of politic and international relations, but a basis on which their many generations’ belief has built upon.

## **PART IV: CONCLUSION**

All of the analyses in these chapters above are meant to be the foundation for this final part. This part marks the end of the research paper by providing four main conclusions that the author has drawn from the analyses above.

First, neoliberalism is able to explain the case of historical animosity between Japan and South Korea, but only to the extent of economy and cooperation. To be more precise, neoliberalism is only applicable when the need for economic profits has reached to the highest and/or security is threatened by outsiders. In other words, reconciliation does not proceed if Korean economic growth depends less on Japan, and/or Korean security does not require close cooperation with Japan. This is proven by the ups and downs in Japan-South Korea trade. During the “down” periods, there were either a third party’s intervention drawing South Korea to them or historical disputes taking place and making their leaders postpone trade to address the problems. The “up” periods, on the other hand, happened when South Korea is facing economic crises or a rupture in its security relations with the United States. In other words, there are times when South Koreans need to cast aside their historical animosity toward Japan to focus on mutual concerns or interests, but these times do not last constantly, leaving the space for historical problems to find the way back into the bilateral relations. The continuing conflicts over the Liancourt Rocks dispute or the Yasukuni controversy are better understood in this light. In summary, interdependence and cooperation are not enough for Japan and South Korea to overcome historical animosity.

Second, neoliberalism has underestimated the effects of historical animosity and ignores the presence of non-material factors, which plays an important role in the way Japan-South Korea relations develop. As the remaining issues have proved, memory is the core reasons for disputes and protests. In the case of the Liancourt Rocks dispute, the South



Koreans find it is a humiliation to let the Japanese claim a part of their land because this resembles the fact that they are still not completely free from the grasp of Japanese colonization. In the case of Yasukuni shrine, the South Koreans consider the Japanese Prime Ministers' visits as the acts of commemorating Japan's imperial era and their rule over Korean Peninsular, which rubs salt into the unhealed wound of the South Koreans about the Second World War. These negative reactions and perceptions are the product of memory of the colonial past. However, these negative reactions and perceptions do not last long, but eventually have to pave the way for more multifaceted and more positive views among the South Korean about Japan. This is illustrated in which memory of Japan the South Korean chose to look at during Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye's presidencies in South Korea. Japan's image in the memory of the South Koreans during Lee Myung-bak's presidency appears to be better, with more recent cultural aspects highlighted and spread among the people. On the other hand, the image of Japan during Park Geun-hye's term contains more historical aspects, reminding the South Koreans of their colonial memory, their sufferings and loss under a "cruel rule" of the Japanese.

Third, to have a better analysis of memory interpretation and non-material factors in Japan-South Korea relations, another approach should be conducted in parallel with neoliberalism. This approach is constructivism, which focuses on the importance of sharing ideas, memories, education, and ideology. In the case of Japan-South Korea relations, constructivism succeeds in explaining matters regarding memory and the shift in memory interpretation. Precisely, the theory of constructivism has answered two questions: (1) why Japan and South Korea hate each other despite their strong cooperation? and (2) why the wound of history remains so deep in these nations? The answer for question (1) is the remaining grudges that the South Koreans still hold against the Japanese because of what they

remember and educated about the colonial past. The answer to question (2) is the lack of memory and education sharing. In other words, it is the absence of constructivism materials that make the distance between Japan and South Korea harder to close. Foreign policies favoring Japan can help bring a better look for the South Koreans and bridge this distance, as the case of Lee Myung-bak has shown, but it would take longer than one presidential term to deal with the deeply rooted animosity the two countries have been holding.

Last, but not least, is that the matter of Japan and South Korea reconciliation should be examined with the presence of both material and non-material factors. That is, economic cooperation and the increase of interdependence are necessary to bring the two countries closer, but they alone could not be efficient enough. To bridge the gap between Japan and South Korea closer, the two countries first need to recognize and address their historical issues properly. That is, the sharing of their perceptions about the past is no less important to look. The enhancement of international interactions is what encourage it. Once memories and ideas between the two countries are exchanged and understood by the other, the way they perceive the past may alter. This is the first step for reconciliation.

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