

Project work group: 2A-20

Topic: Past and present: A historical timeline of Korea-Japan politics and militancy

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Abstract

In today's ever-changing and complex world, fraught with uncertainties and conflicts, the longstanding conflict between Japan and Korea has not gone unnoticed. This hotly debated conflict goes all the way back to 1910, when Japan annexed Korea with the Japan-Korea Treaty signed by Wanyong, Prime Minister of Korea, and Terauchi Masatake, the Prime Minister of Japan from 1916 to 1918. Since the people of Korea suffered tremendously under the Japanese colonial rule and were mostly forced to work as manual labour for the Japanese, they developed a deep grudge towards them, this, then, serving as one of the prime causes for the current state of political tension between the two countries. Furthermore, "comfort women", a euphemism for young innocent women from poor rural areas, were forced into prostitution by the Imperial Japanese army between 1932 and 1945. The indelible psychological scars that were etched in the minds of the Koreans translated to a deep seated psychological inclination for vengeance and hatred towards the Japanese. Currently, territorial disputes over Japan Takeshima and Dokdo island have exacerbated the relations between both parties.

1.2 Rationale

At the present moment, there are significant geopolitical implications rising from instability in Far East Asia. In addition, the extrapolated economic reality is another aspect especially pertinent in the context of Korea-Japan rivalry.

Profound implications in various fields are equally apparent in the context of the current clash between the two Asian powers. Such repercussions encompass trade war and arms race. Although there are detailed and in depth studies conducted on 20th century Korea-Japan bilateral relations, such as Rozman's, (2004), our research provides a more contemporary stance between Japan and Korea and reappraises the current political concerns that plague the world today as other studies rarely incorporate modern day stumbling blocks that impede the improvement of Japan-Korea relations. Such a study is especially imperative in today's world, given the profound social, political, technological and other major changes sweeping across the global landscape. Furthermore, with the gradual shift in roles between superpowers such as China and the United States, the relations between Korea and Japan have certainly become more volatile.

1.3 Thesis statement

While we acknowledge that there are some basis for optimism in the contemporary Korean-Japanese relations there also exist some factors for pessimism such as historical baggage, ineffectual political and economic policies adopted by both countries. All in all, we are of the opinion that historical baggage is the main factor which resulted in the political strain between Korea and Japan.

1.4 Research questions

Overlying questions

1. What are the factors and forces that shape the Korean-Japan political relation?
 - To what extent is historical baggage a possible factor in explaining Korean-Japanese political relations?
 - To what extent do Korea and Japan government policies shape the nature of Korea Japanese relations since world war 2
 - To what extent do international superpowers / philosophical-cultural perspectives play an important role in shaping the development of Korean-Japanese relations?
2. Are there grounds for optimism in resolving the Japan-Korea political tensions today?

1.5 Significance of report

Due to the current escalating trend of humanity not being riveted to keep up with current affairs, our project helps to increase their awareness on the Korea-Japan diplomacy. Furthermore, we believe that as the current superpowers, namely the United States and China, will likely become involved, the issue will escalate to involve many other countries in the world. Hence, the significance of this report is to spread awareness to many about the contemporary and volatile japan-korea relations and the factors which resulted in their bilateral relations.

1.6 Limitations and strengths

As the Korea-Japan relations continue to exacerbate and evolve, it is impossible for this project to regularly keep itself updated as the situation unravels, especially with the new elected prime minister of Japan, Yoshihide Suga. He has been a strong supporter of easing political ties with Korea and is attempting to come to a peaceful resolution. This will yield far reaching repercussions on the Japan-Korea hostility. (Limitations)

Through the detailed analysis of the factors and forces affecting Korea-Japan hostility, this research project will draw a projected-logical conclusion on whether strained political tensions will remain the status quo or come to eventual detente. (Strengths)

1.7 Research methods

Particular research studies (Books, real-life examples, as well as theoretical concepts), of different political slants and views towards this situation would be gathered to further vindicate our point that there is little ground for optimism in rectifying Japan-Korea's strained international relations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Broad Survey

Indeed, the question of whether South Korea and Japan can come to a peaceful detente has been endlessly debated. Conventionally, the liberalist theory has remained the presiding view among historians spanning across different decades. Prominent historians are Robert O. Keohane

and Joseph S. Nye, who believed that increased economic and political interdependence between countries can reduce the likelihood of physical conflict from occurring. This traditional appraisal of Japan-Korea relations was largely an economic interpretation, enshrined in publications such as Keohane and Nye's *Power and Interdependence* in 1989. In fact, similar theorists who supported this view include *Chung-in Moon (1995)* and *Beverly Crawford (1995)*, who believe that economic interdependence and collaboration between countries "entail positive spillover effects in the political, social, and cultural realm in such a way as to enhance mutual understanding and trust between states". (Moon, 1995) Based on this perspective, formation of well secured regional economic collaborative relations aggrandize economic profits, and chart the path to tranquility and security between Japan and Korea.

Such a view according to other scholars however is overly optimistic and simplistic. It was opposed by Lester Thurow (1992), in his book, *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe, and America* published in 1992.

It is true that the liberal view and optimist perspective have been greatly lambasted in today's world as they are considered to be obsolete. Thurow was doubtful about the salience of gain from global collaboration but instead contended that the increase in economic interdependence results in the concomitant rise in economic and trade disputes. Similar to theorist Dalchoong Kim and Chung-in Moon, he believed that the "memory of a bitter history, lasting mutual distrust, and the lingering structure of deterrence based on multiple bilateral alliances in the region would not allow economic interdependence and cooperation to produce any viable peace dividends". (Kim and Moon, 1997) Instead of curtailing states' impetus to engage in warfare, the "popular fear of open engagement...had prevented most Koreans from internalizing liberal ideas and practices". (Moon and Ko, in Akaha, 1999) With the commonly cited assumption that economic advancements cannot stimulate ameliorated foreign relations between Japan and Korea, Thurow's criticism on the liberals' view triggered an extensive and ongoing debate.

In recent times, as more and more historians have delineated and distinguished between the security and economic policies of Japan and Korea, Moon's insular economic-based interpretation has been lost forever.

2.2 Realists perspective

Currently, the internet is rife with negative outlooks pertaining to the complicated relations between Japan and Korea and how the situation would evolve as time passes.

One of the realists is Victor D. Cha who is an American academic, author and former national foreign policy advisor. His take on this event was related to the Quasi-Alliance Theory which believed in the importance of an external party in cultivating a better relation between Japan and Korea. However, being the former director for Asian Affairs in the White House's National Security Council, he knew that the mending of their relations would not come in a short span of time. In our current state of political affairs, both Japan and Korea share a common ally, the United States, but also a common enemy, North Korea. The Quasi-Alliance Model, developed by Victor Cha from a Neoclassical realism approach, aims to explain why states form quasi-alliances based on concerns of abandonment and entrapment. Based on the quasi-alliance hypotheses, the conceptual prototype elaborates on why countries in a quasi-alliance contract can possibly benefit from the presence of the third-party or bystander state. Bilateral associations are the backbone of the quasi-alliance, and the presence of a third-party member helps to keep matters in check by resolving conflicts. If the inner core, that is, Japan or Korea initiates a lopsided concern of abandonment and entrapment between the bilateral treaty, there will not be collaboration. Hence, the presence of a third-party state in the outer core can settle the unbalanced views or conflicts through reducing the fears of abandonment and entrapment of the aggressor by offering security to the protagonist. Yet, the bilateral states may strengthen and build up their alliance further and increase cooperation out of the new worry of abandonment from their third-party state. Despite the fair or unfair nature of the quasi-alliance theory, the actions of the third-party is the most essential element to cooperative relationships. This overthrows the significance of changes in the global safety conditions, internal attitudes and the footing of all bilateral relations.

Another realist, Lester Thurow, former dean of Massachusetts Institute of Technology Sloan School of Management, wrote a book titled: *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle among Japan, Europe, and America*. In the book, he reviewed and summarized recent trends of international relations studies in South Korea on three distinct dimensions and suggested future directions of research in the field, and resulted in a paradigm shift in the interpretation of the topic. Their focus was on the constraints and opportunities for the development of indigenous international relations theories and models. In order to accommodate for new changes, we posit liberal constructivism, which combines liberalism with constructivism, as a new epistemological alternative to the existing lines of international relations theories. Lester Thurow posits that it is impossible for both Japan and Korea to own the 21st century due to the weaknesses and strengths both countries possess. He believes that the success of Japan was built on an export-led economy, but that cannot be the route to success in the future due to the rapid growth of globalisation. However, Korea is facing a continuously ageing population with a decreasing workforce, and are unable to constantly strengthen their economic prowess. Coupled with

incessant increasing tensions with Japan, Korea is also unable to build up their country. At this point, it is anyone's game. Furthermore, his belief that "increased economic transactions accompanied by a concurrent rise in economic conflicts and disputes" (Thurow, 1992) shook the basis upon which the views of many liberal historians were predicated. Rather than to subscribe to the capitalist peace thesis advocated by the liberals, he contended that even if it "was valid, it cannot be applied to the Northeast Asian region". (Thurow, 1992)

2.3 Liberals perspective

With the relentless march of new technology, coupled with rapid globalisation, as well as the end of the Cold War, economic interdependence has widened across the globe since 1980 and has become more important than ever in today's ever changing world, particularly in the Korean peninsula. The formation of liberal free trade organisations such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation(APEC) and European Free Trade Association(EFTA) has profoundly contributed to the improvement of global economic cooperation and interdependence. Against such a backdrop, the liberal perspective has been heavily promoted with greater support and proof

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye believed that increased interdependence can reduce the potential for physical conflict. They wrote a book titled, *Power and Interdependence in the Information Age*. Their publication influenced many other historians to subscribe to the liberal view. Their accumulation of evidence built up to the conclusion that "economic interdependence would increase the opportunity costs of war and thus reduce states' incentives to use physical force in settling conflicts" (Keohane and Nye, 1989) Given that this book was published near the collapse of the Soviet Union, it could be argued that it represented an attack on the Marxist-Leninist tradition of arguing that "increased interdependence would lead to the highest stage of capitalism, which would eventually result in hegemonic wars among imperial powers" (Lenin,1939) Their publication, *Power and Interdependence*, has been widely lauded as a detailed and incontrovertible view on the interdependence between states and its ramifications on security, convinced many historians such as Beverly Crawford and Charles E. Morrison, in *Asia Pacific Security Outlook 2003*, to subscribe to the liberal views. Their work offered a means to distill and combine the wisdom of the realist and liberalist positions, and formulated a coherent theoretical framework for the political evaluation of interdependence. Keohane and Nye's prudent evaluation laid the foundation for the liberals' arguments by enlisting many such as Hook and Morrison to pursue their views. In another set of positive developments in 2002 as Morrison asserts, North Korea declared that they would encourage "foreign direct investments by designating special administrative zones in Shinuiju and Gaesung ". (Morrison, 2003) and undertook "sweeping market-oriented reforms, declaring it would revamp the commodities' pricing system and introduce performance-based pay", These positive political and economic developments provided South Koreans hope that the new economic reforms and political policies that emerge from Pyongyang would greatly benefit South-North relations.

Another example of an optimist is Chung-in Moon who believes that economic interdependence and cooperation acts as a binding force between the two states. Similar to Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Chung-in Moon posits that if both parties were to depend on each other economically and are willing to collaborate, relations between both countries would improve and conflicts would be resolved. In his paper titled, international relation studies in South Korea, targeted the recent trends of international relations studies in South Korea on three distinct dimensions and given the opportunities and intellectual resources, the paper concludes that the future of the discipline of international relations in South Korea is quite promising.

For the evaluation of Japan-Korea relations, some optimists centre their views on safety collaboration rather than financial cooperation. In Japan's International Relations: Politics, economics and security in 2005, by Glenn D. Hook, Julie Gilson, Christopher W. Hughes, Hugo Dobson, "[p]rogress in Japan-South Korea bilateral security relations has also been remarkable with various personnel exchanges and training exercises... looked to build up a pattern of triangular US-Japan-South Korea security cooperation in order to counter any military contingency on the Korean Peninsula". (Hook, et. Al., 2005) Although some views held by the liberals displayed realist tendencies, they have shown a good demonstration of the well-grounded and objective arguments. However, Morrison's assessments of Japan-Korea safety relations should be praised for its neutrality. His appraisal of regional prospects and policies of Japan and Korea expounded liberal as well as realist viewpoints. Albeit quoting that "huge success of the 2002 World Cup soccer competition jointly hosted by Japan and South Korea improved the public perceptions of each country in the other" (Morrison, 2003), he carries on to warn against unfettered optimism by commenting on the "occasional problems" (Morrison, 2003) between Japan's relations with South Korea.

2.4 Conclusion

Indeed, the liberal perspectives provide ostensible benefits to the understanding of Japan-Korea hostility. However, it appears to be way more biased and subjective in our opinion, considering that different individuals can perceive this matter in a liberalistic or pessimistic point of view. On the contrary, the realist's perspective seems to be more accepted and reliable. In spite of much disapprobation and flak from contemporary liberal theorists and historians, the realist perspective must be lauded for providing a more accurate interpretation, keeping in mind that contemporary issues such as trade conflicts and superpowers influence are on the rise.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

Historical information using primary and secondary sources will be gathered and analysed, including well known publications by theorists and historians. The critiquing and evaluating of sources will bring validity and reliability to the arguments and conclusions we make

Factors affecting the Japan-Korea relationship would be further substantiated with Morrison's Asia Pacific Security Outlook 2003 and Hook's Japan International Relations: Politics, economic and security, expounding the changing security environment, and boons economic interdependence has had on Japan-Korea relations and *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle among Japan, Europe, and America*, illustrating the effects of economic interdependence between countries, such as increased tensions and conflicts; ostensible divide and tension between realist and liberal perspective has been acknowledged.

Chapter 4 Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Grounds for optimism

Japan and Korea's increasing integration and demand of traditional imports

As the world evolves, it is transcending into a more competitive and globalised environment where people live. Reports have shown that the young generation of South Koreans, mainly those largely supporting Sang-ho Roh, Assistant Professor in Ewha Womans University, have "fewer negative images of Japan than the older generation. For this reason, the cultural and psychological aspects of Korea-Japanese relations are likely to be normalized". (Morrison, 2003) After reviewing a good amount of data, Tokyo University professor Inoguchi Takashi inferred that "ties were developing faster than expected, as seen in manufacturing, the service sector, and even fads for products from around the region, such as Korean kimchi in Japan and Japanese animation shows in many countries". (Takashi, in Rozman, 2004) On October 24, 1998, for the first time in 53 years, Japanese songs were allowed to be performed in public in South Korea. Japan Week, where many events are paid for by the Japan embassy, famous Japanese singers such as Tomoe Sawa were invited to hold a concert in which she performed two songs in the Japanese language after being accepted by the South Korean authorities. After the event was aired in the media, an increasing support base for traditional imports in Japan and Korea helped to improve the correlation between Japan and Korea. A larger integration of the culture of both parties helped to increase the psychological-cultural backdrop that was required to patch up their thorny relationship. Such instances of acceptance between both parties can result in an outpour of advantageous results on the diplomatic connection between Japan and Korea. The idea of "give and take" can help to provide possible areas for international bonding and dedication to occur, thus improving the strained Japan-Korean relations as soon as possible.

Japan and Korea's rising financial interdependence

In today's interconnected fast paced world, trade and economic cooperation is more quintessential than ever. The Japanese were accustomed to “walking a fine line in the postwar era between unobtrusive economic leadership” and the “economic conditions [did] raise hopes for regionalism”. (Rozman, 2004) In fact, Japan's trade with South Korea grew rapidly and was cooperating economically. Japan's imports from Korea “totalled U.S. \$11.7 billion, and its exports U.S. \$17.5 billion, figures that made Japan Korea's third-largest trading partner”. (McClain, 2002) Since 2001, Korea has been Japan's third largest trading partner, where total bilateral trade rose to ¥9.3 trillion. Shortly, South Korea had risen to the forefront and became a financial trading hub. There was even a goal of a free trade area in the Asian region that was under discussion. In September 1998, the Japanese envoy commenced the arrangement of a free trade treaty with Korea. The horizons of the free trade agreement expanded when China participated in it. Although the most prominent evolution came only with the Chiang Mai agreement in May 2000 during a currency swapping program, the Japanese had already “welcomed progress being made”. (Rozman, 2004) at ASEAN+3 meetings. With increased economic interdependence and investment between Japan and South Korea, both countries can work towards a common financial aim of affluence. Rather than engaging in trade conflicts and economic disputes, both parties implement well formulated policies, establishing a conducive environment for international trade and cooperation to occur. Such policies act as a binding force between Japan and Korea and the positive spillover on political relations is evident. Hence, there are grounds to believe that the Japan-Korea hostility can one day come to a peaceful resolution.

International superpowers as well as philosophical ideologies improving Japan-Korean relations

The United States played a quintessential role in fostering closer trilateral relations between Korea, Japan and itself. The “Nye Initiative”, announced in 1994 and named after the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Joseph Nye, elucidated that the United States of America would continue to have a huge military presence in East-Asia in spite of the end of the Cold War to maintain regional security. This policy asserts the US's role as a crucial power-balance and stabilizing force between China, Japan and Korea, allowing for stronger trilateral relations between these countries, and a gradual improvement in Japan-Korea relations.

Again and again, the United States has been tactfully employing its weight as both states' cardinal military allies, to push these parties toward closer alliance. Various policies formulated by the United States reinforced their importance and reliability as a partner, bolstering U.S.

requests. This in turn results in South Korea and Japan taking steps toward deeper trilateral relations and collaboration

A case in point would be the Johnson administration's efforts to ascertain the 1965 normalization treaty between Korea and Japan. Owing to China's possession of nuclear ammunition and the escalation of the Vietnam War in the early 1960s, the regional security environment in East Asia had declined ever since. Hence, the Johnson administration served to resolve everlasting conflicts between countries in East Asia, helping to further improve the relations between Japan and Korea. As the South Korean and Japanese government tried to steer the controversial debates surrounding standardizations, the United States repeatedly brought up to both Japan and Korea its passion in fostering stronger Japan-Korea ties.

Ultimately, U.S. diplomacy helped pave the way for the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, signed in June of 1965, which was seen as a stepping stone towards better bilateral relations between Japan and Korea.

China, Japan and Korea's trilateral relationship is commonly grounded in Confucianism. Confucianism greatly impacted the social and political organizations of these countries and eventually became the official state principles of governance in all three countries. This belief in Confucianism helped Japan and Korea to improve their bilateral relations as it provided them with a common vision in the long run.

4.2 Ground for pessimism

Japan's harsh colonial rule over Korea from 1910 to 1945 that created the legacy of bitterness

a. Japan's denial of atrocities of war perpetuated to Korea and refusal to take responsibility

The oppressive colonial rule of Korea bred the masses mistrust and hatred towards the

Japanese. However, many Japanese people and their government have “not yet come to terms with the consequences of the Imperial Army’s fifteen-year rampage and occupation of Asia between 1931 and 1945 when over 15 million Asians perished due to expansionist policies” (Kingston, 2001) It could be argued that Japan’s reign of terror has been more so a stumbling block to Japan Korea relations, because of the the despotic colonial rule unleashed up Korea even since the annexation of Korea in 1910 to 1945. Some war atrocities include mass rapes and massacres, and crimes committed against humanity during the second World War. Yet, Japan continues to deny their war atrocities. A vivid example of Japan’s blatant denial of war crimes is the case of comfort women, a euphemism of young innocent women from poor rural areas in China or Korea, who were “subjected to forced prostitution by the imperial Japanese army between 1932 and 1945.”(History.com) In spite of a series of allegations and rumours, the Japanese government had the audacity to deny all responsibility, asserting that such a system never existed. Even when confronted with archival evidence, Japan continued to deny their involvement with such a system, and even pushed the blame and responsibility to private entrepreneurs. Such denial of atrocities caused further irritation among the Korean Peninsula. When this was also shown to be untrue, the government then posited that the comfort women were not forced into service, when clearly there were many instances where the Japanese imperial army abduct innocent women and sexually assault and rape them. Evidently, the stance taken by the Japanese government pertaining to this case is that of eluding direct responsibility. Undeniably, the calibrated gestures and hedged admissions on wrongdoing can generate perceptions of a nation eager to bury the past before taking its measure. Sadly, the historical baggage of Japanese animosity has been well entrenched in the psyche of the victimised nations, translating into a sense of misgiving and injustice among Koreans today. This was further perpetuated and accentuated when Japanese decision-makers explicitly shirk the responsibility of the past aggressions of their nation. Hence, the Japanese lack of remorse to apologise for the past war atrocities has continued to strain Japan-Korea relations today.

b. Korea being white-washed by Japan for all of its rich history

From the start of the annexation of Korea, for Japan to ensure full control over its Korea, they initiated an all-out war on Korean culture. Schools and colleges were disallowed from speaking Korean and Japanese authorities stressed on manual labor and loyalty to the Emperor. Public areas also picked up Japanese, and a decree to create films in Japanese soon came along. It also became an offence to teach history from non-approved texts and Japanese officials burned over 200,000 Korean historical documents, destroying the precious historical memory of Korea. During the Japanese reign, Japan took over Korea’s workforce and territory. Almost 100,000 Japanese families settled in Korea with land they had been given and chopped down trees by the millions and planted non-native species, transforming a nostalgic scenery into something many Koreans didn’t recognize. Furthermore, the Japanese government had the audacity to “encourage a collective amnesia regarding Japan’s shared past with Asia through its powers of

textbook censorship and centralised education policies”, so that “[m]any Japanese regard themselves as victims of World War II and few recall the sustained victimization of neighbouring countries that claimed so many victims and left such deep scars in these nations”. (Hein and Seldon, 2000) This is a clear portrayal that the 2005 protest that broke out in Korea was a demonstration against a Japanese history textbook, “Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho” that trivialised the nature of Japan’s military violence in the First Sino-Japanese War, in Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910, in the Second Sino-Japanese War, and in World War II. The Korean Peninsula strongly demonstrated against the approval of the 2005 Japanese history textbook which not only was portrayed in the Japanese perspective but also decreased the level of atrocities and harm brought towards Korea by Japan. North Korea also condemned the final version of the Japanese history textbook as it was seen to have Japanese propaganda and was written totally in the Japanese perspective. (Los Angeles Times, 2005), quoted the textbooks “philistinism peculiar to Japan, a vulgar and shameless political dwarf”. The persistent Japanese focus on “its experience as victim, rather than as aggressor, the continuing efforts to sanitize history that is taught to the country’s youth evoke distrust and suspicion on the part of Japan’s neighbours”. (McCormack, 1996) Additionally, the Japanese government has relied heavily on censorship of textbooks and decreased the severity of multiple events, such as war atrocities and the comfort women incidents, wittily making use of periphrasis and euphemisms that can help to minimize the negative consequences and shift responsibility away from the Japanese Royal Troops. It also became an offence to teach history from non-approved texts and Japanese officials burned over 200,000 Korean historical documents, destroying the precious historical memory of Korea. During the Japanese reign, Japan took over Korea’s workforce and territory. Almost 100,000 Japanese families settled in Korea with land they had been given and chopped down trees by the millions and planted non-native species, transforming a nostalgic scenery into something many Koreans didn’t recognize. Intercession from the authorities in China and Korea has been perceived as a form of prevention into domestic affairs, and the pressure has built up drastically in heightened regional tension, adding to the friction and tensions between Japan and Korea today.

c. Japan’s thoughtless behaviour of foreign policies towards North and South

Korea

(Rozman, 2004) believes that Japan should be cognizant of the fact that the victimised nations cannot be appeased by Japan’s refusal to “punish or even repudiate those guilty of historical crimes”. The victimised nations’ continued resentment towards Japan is further exacerbated by the latter’s whitewashing of history. May 1994 saw Justice Minister Nagano Shigeto calling the Nanking Massacre of 1937 a “fabrication” alongside Sakura Shin, director-general of the Environmental Agency asserting that “Tokyo did not fight with the aim of waging a war of aggression”; “Japan was not the only one that was wrong”, and “thanks to us

that they were able to become independent” (Rozman, 2004) This accentuated the mistrust and hatred towards Japan not only from the Korean Peninsula but also other countries in Asia.

In addition, visits by political figures to the Yasukuni Shintō Shrine resulted in sour political relations. For instance, on Dec. 26, 2013, a year after taking office, Shinzo Abe (Japanese premier, 2012-20) made an official visit to the Yasukuni Shintō Shrine, prompting a rare rift with the U.S. Such instances were not one off, as Nakasone Yasuhiro’s (Japanese premier, 1982-7) decision to “pay an official visit as prime minister to Yasukuni Shintō Shrine on 15 August 1985 – the date of the fortieth anniversary of Japan’s defeat in World War II” showed a lack of repent and insensitivity by the Japanese government as “the shrine being for Japan’s 2.5 million war dead, including the wartime prime minister and Class A war criminal Tōjō Hideki – confirmed Chinese and East Asian suspicions of Japan’s lack of contrition for its militaristic past.” (Hook, 2005) Undeniably, Japan’s whitewashing of history reflects her lack of sincerity in reconciling with the past. Ineffectual government policies formulated by Japanese decision-makers have promulgated to broaden its regional position in Asia, and is perceived by their South Korean counterparts as imperiling their interests. This constitutes a stumbling block towards forging cordial bilateral relations between Korea and Japan

South Korea’s insecurity about its own standing in the regional political and economic arena in the face of Japan’s political and economic supremacy

a. *South Korea’s dispute over territory with Japan*

Territories are an “immeasurable form of prestige for a nation”. (Bell, 2001) and shows a country’s political standing in today’s world. Indeed, a lot of countries have taken on an imperialist approach, as well as expansionist policies to extend their control over territories which do not necessarily belong to them. The national sovereignty of the nations involved will ultimately be infringed upon, and these territorial disputes will ineluctably result in heightened conflicts and tensions between countries. A poignant example in relation to Japan-Korea relations is the Liancourt Rocks dispute between Japan and South Korea. The Liancourt rocks are a group of disputed islets situated in the Sea of Japan, but are currently controlled and administered by South Korea. To the Koreans, it is known as Dokdo islands, but is being contested and claimed by Japan as Takeshima. Takeshima is “indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based on international law” (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018) shedding light on the Japan’s desire to claim the island, even though the islands were “rightly” “restored to them at the end of World War II”. In fact, such territorial

disputes have amalgamated to armed confrontations in the last century, including the armed skirmishes leading to the sinking of a Japanese ship by Korean mortar fire on 12 July 1953. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, 2007) Additionally, five Japanese fishermen were shot to death, 3,929 Japanese fishermen and 328 fishing boats were forcefully abducted and detained in South Korea as hostages for crossing the line between 1952 and 1965. According to the Shimane Prefectural Government, the fishermen were released in 1965 in return for the release of 472 Koreans imprisoned in Japan. Ultimately, territory is a representation of one's political power, and acts as a tangible yardstick of a nation's success and national strength. Essentially, the inability to achieve total control and sovereignty of the territory that it claims as its own would compromise the legitimacy of the government; to lead or to run the country. To be elected to parliament, opposition members would even manipulate any kind of infringement on national sovereignty, culminating in vehement backlash by the mass media. The ensuing mutual distrust and suspicion between Japan and Korea will continue unabated.

Economic

b. South Korea's trade disputes with Japan

International trade connections between states have been the main factor that can bring about economic benefits to countries. Regrettably, South Korea's trade relations with Japan have ineluctably caused immense tension and conflicts. Over the years, South Korea and Japan have been caught up in a political trade discourse. The main factor of the conflict is due to South Korea's relentless push for restoration for Japan's World War II-era atrocities. The ongoing trade between Japan and Korea is competing on several key economic basis, electronics, computer, transport and others. During the trade war, the imposition of tariffs by and on both parties set off an additional divide between them. Firstly, South Korea started imposing a 15.39% tariff on Japan-made stainless steel bars in July 2004 and made the decision to extend the measure for the third time in June 2017. Then, Japan's annual stainless steel bar exports to South Korea, which were at 9,269 tons in 2002 before the tariff was imposed, decreased by around 60% to 3,791 tons in 2019 as a form of retaliation. South Korea currently suffers from a trade deficit with Japan, as it rose from U.S. \$19.2 billion in 2019, to U.S. \$20.9 billion during the same period in 2020. If the current trend continues, South Korea's full-year trade deficit with Japan could exceed the record high of U.S. \$24.5 billion recorded last year.

Another vivid illustration is the kimchi dispute that occurred in 1996, when Japan proposed designating “Japanese kimchi, pronounced “kimuchi”, as an official Atlanta Olympic food”. (The Independent, 2000) Concurrently, they alienated their South Korean counterparts by increasing “kimuchi” export rapidly. In retaliation, South Korea insisted on a dire need for the introduction of an international standard to “protect consumers’ health and to ensure fair practices in the food trade”. (Korean Food Research Institute, Korea, 2002) Historical baggage has culminated in dissent over global trade issues and economic cooperation. The legitimacy of the government has long rested on the notion of its capacity to protect the nation’s economic advantages, as well as its ability to deliver promised financial developments to its populace. Since no one side is willing to compromise its stand on the trade issues, mutual suspicion and hostility are easily stoked. Korean- Japanese trade relations have continued to be plagued with disputes with little hope of conciliation between Japan and South Korea.

Furthermore, In July 2019, Japan took South Korea away from a “white list” of nations that were granted favoured treatment for export permission. Japanese officials were originally seen to prove the confinements as a response to putative South Korean contravention of United Nations interdiction against exporting certain materials to North Korea. Proceeding on, Japanese authorities also explained that the “relationship of trust” pertaining to South Korea’s export control and regulation methods had been “significantly undermined” due to their denial towards participating in working-level export-control talks for multiple years. Despite the real reasons, South Korea’s withdrawal from Japan’s white list was seen as a retaliation to creepingly increasing tensions—and also as a straightforward threat to South Korea’s information and communications technology (ICT) sector. Such a move by the Japanese authorities proved to be a threat towards the Korea officials, generating further distrust and conflict between both parties, causing their current relations to be left in a gloomy outlook.

Besides the kimchi dispute and “white list”, the semiconductor industry of Korea is also put at risk. This is because Korea is one of the world’s largest semiconductor manufacturers, accompanied by Samsung and SK Hynix, which are also significant semiconductor producers in the world. They rely heavily on exportation of semiconductors accounting up to 92% of its export increase in 2018, and 80% in 2020. Although the mean value of South Korean imports of fluorinated polyimide, photoresist and hydrogen fluoride from Japan is relatively small, worth just about \$33.6 million of these chemicals per month—South Korea provides other countries with \$8.4 billion worth of semiconductors each month that require these three chemicals to function. This means that South Korea’s economic loss is potentially 250 times greater than that of Japan’s chemical manufacturers if the trade disputes were to continue, and thus putting South Korea at a significant disadvantage.

Hence, if both parties are not willing to come to a detente, where they can peacefully talk their situation out, instead of imposing tariffs and blacklisting certain countries, the current state of politics between Japan and Korea would prolong, with not much optimism to hold onto.

North Korea's jeopardising of the security of the region and the world

a. North Korea's imposition of the missile threat and nuclear hazard

In today's technology advanced world fraught with uncertainties, weapons of mass destruction are perceived as a fatal hazard to society. In North-East Asia particularly, the rapid development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and "ballistic missiles continued throughout the 1990s, when North Korea's threat of developing WMD and its missile activities came to be viewed as a destabilizing factor for Japan's own security as well as that of the region". (Hoadley and Rüländ, 2006) In fact, rather than "appear[ing] to be more concerned with ... South Koreans", they often appear to be more afraid and concerned with North Korea's conventional military, missile, and potential nuclear capabilities". (Morrison, 2003) A clear demonstration of this point is the unexpected and dramatic statement made by then Prime Minister Koizumi in a peace summit with Kim Jong-il "raised the prospect for direct negotiations on the missile threat to Japan". (Lovell, 2003), attempting to cool international conflicts and tensions between both parties. Unfortunately, the future was bleak and any further prospects for progress vanished when truth was unveiled in October 2002 that North Korea was undergoing a secret uranium enrichment program to increase the rate of nuclearisation in violation of the Agreed Framework. When the Pyongyang-Tokyo conversation took place, North Korea decided to negotiate with the United States and wanted to pressure the Bush administration to go into direct conciliations via the termination of the non-proliferation treaty (NPT) and restarting aspects nts of its nuclear program which was stopped by the Agreed Framework. Consequently, Japan has become confronted with the prospect that the threat posed by North Korea's missiles could increase dramatically. In fact, North Korea's threats transformed into reality, with the North-East asian country launching a missile across Hokkaido on August 29 2017. North Korea's blatant nuclearization inexorably forced her neighbours especially Japan and South Korea to take cognizance of its heightened nuclear and missile capabilities. More significantly , it ignited fear and induced a deep sense of national insecurity among Japan and its regional neighbours towards North Korean nuclear belligerence, thus causing the future stability of the region at stake . Such deep-seated misgivings about the nuclear-armed North Korea served to escalate tensions between the latter and her immediate neighbours, South Korea and Japan, thus throwing this region into an ocean of political uncertainty .

b. *North Korea's abetting of cross-border terrorists*

The inclusion of North Korea as “part of the U.S. President George W. Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ connected the North to the volatile Middle East and suggested that the Korean peninsula will remain a region of conflict”. (Morrison, 2003)

Unsurprisingly, Japan had long cultivated the suspicion that North Korea was plotting and funding cross-border terrorists against it. As a result, relations between Korea (specifically North Korea) and Japan were always frayed and bitter due to constant suspicions. A case in point is that the “détente between North Korea and Japan quickly broke down in mutual animosity. Revelations of the death of the majority of abductees that North Korea had admitted to kidnapping triggered widespread anger in Japan and led to the evaporation of support for a settlement with Pyongyang.” (Lovell, 2003)

Such relentless suspicions and hostility between both parties worsened the relations, further causing a divide between them, thereby making the situation harder to resolve.

Furthermore, the Japanese also watched with disdain as their North Korean counterparts gave safe haven to the elements of the Japanese Red Army, a terrorist group responsible for a series of terror attacks such as the infamous hijacking of Japan Airlines Flight 351 on March 31, 1970 at Tokyo International Airport. Wielding katanas and a bomb, they forced the plane to fly to Fukuoka and later Gimpo Airport in Seoul, where all passengers were freed. It then flew to North Korea, where the hijackers abandoned the plane and the crewmembers were released. North Korea’s alleged support for the cross-border terrorists proved to be a pertinent source of irritation and friction in Japan-Korea relations. Not only did it undercut the legitimacy of the Japanese government, the rhetoric situated North Korea amongst other nations as sponsors of organized terror. This was seen as an intervention into the domestic affairs of Japan, and it was bound to heighten the mutual suspicion and rivalry. Thus it resulted in the escalation of tensions between Japan and North Korea.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the above discussion has shed light on the factors and forces that help to mould the relations of Japan and Korea. Unfortunately, the strained Japan-Korean relations are slated to persist, at least into the near future. For Japan and Korea to reach a peaceful detente in the future, is nothing but an elusive dream. Although the liberals hold a convincing argument as

to why current relations would turn for the better, in this context, their perspective can be rejected straightaway. Additionally, Japan's unwillingness to admit to war atrocities and blatant whitewashing of history only serves to aggravate Japan-Korea hostility. Despite the obvious advantages brought about by overseas field trips for the strained Japan-Korean relations, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that such advances have been fervently rejected in Japan. As a form of retaliation, a comic book called "Manga Kenkanryu", or "Hating the Korean Wave" was released in 2005, with Japan-Korean disputes and anti-Korean sentiments being the main perspective in which the novel is written in. In response, "The Hate Japan Wave", a manhwa in direct opposition to "The Hate Korea Wave", is currently being written by a South Korea cartoonist Kim Sung-mo, because "The Hate Korea Wave" had "looked down on Koreans, and distorted history". Furthermore, the ensuing trade conflict between Japan and Korea only managed to exacerbate the sense of competition, without any apparent progress for the strained Japan-Korea relations.

Therefore, we are of the opinion that there are **no grounds for optimism** in resolving the Japan-Korean hostility today.

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