

# Why Were Japan and Korea At Odds Under Conservative Governments?: Japan–Korea Relations in the US–China Rivalry<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Japanese–Korean relations have shown no signs of improvement since 2012, when Lee Myung-bak, then Republic of Korea President, visited Takeshima (Dokdo in Korean). The situation remained unchanged even six year later after that. Why do relations between Japan and Korea continue to worsen and not be improved? The underlying reasons are structural changes that include a lessening of each country's economic and security importance to the other and the differences in Northeast Asian views on the rise of China.

Keywords: Japanese–Korean relations, Japan, Republic of Korea (ROK), China, United States

## INTRODUCTION

[B]ecause of the Japanese leadership and its repeated backward-looking remarks on historical issues as well as territorial issues, trust has not been established.... [T]his isn't something that two leaders can talk out on their own.... These women saw their youth taken from them and destroyed... [and] ... they live with their pain. Yet Japan, far from making apologies, continues rather to subject these women to further insult and humiliation.<sup>2</sup>

These words were spoken by the President of the Republic of Korea (ROK), Park Geun-hye, to then U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel at a meeting held in Seoul on 30 September 2013. The Park administration took office in February 2013;

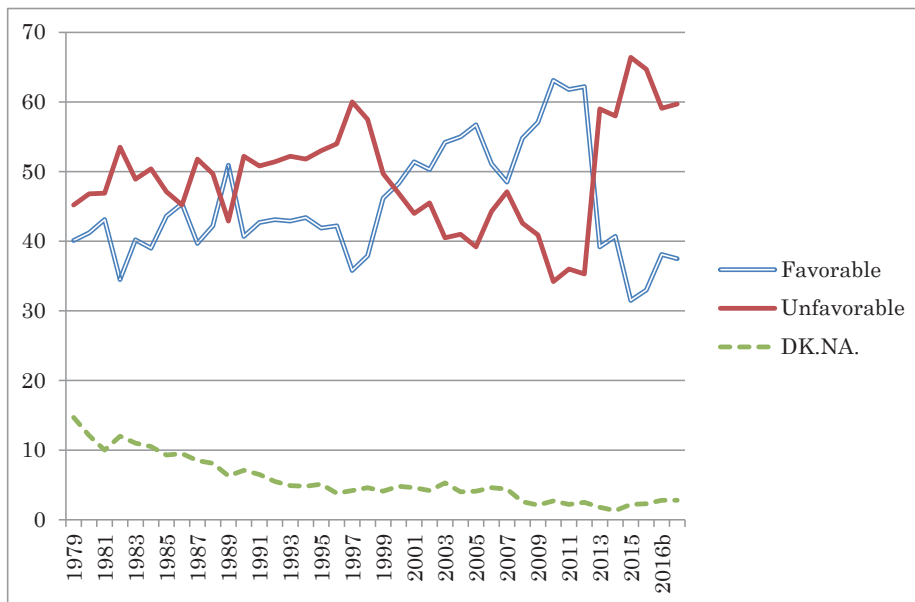
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Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō came to power just two months earlier. Both are well-known conservative political leaders in their countries, so the media—especially the Japanese media—expected that they would quickly improve the relationship between Japan and South Korea.

However, relations between the two governments soon worsened. The ROK government in particular took a hardline stance. The Japanese side repeatedly stated—at least pro forma—that it was prepared for a summit meeting with the ROK at any time, while Seoul did not offer even a suggestion of when that might be possible until 2015. The ROK government’s stance remained unyielding, as evidenced by Foreign Affairs Minister Yun Byung-se’s statement of 14 October, 2013: “I see no signs that the conditions for such are ripening, given the lack of serious measures by Japan at present.”<sup>3</sup> Ever since the ROK democratized in 1987, preparations for a summit meeting between the two nations’ leaders have always begun soon after a new Korean president took office. In light of this, the situation in 2013 was an extremely extraordinary case.<sup>4</sup>

**Graph One: Favorability rating of South Korea (Japanese)**



Source: Gaiko ni Kansuru Yoronchosa, Naikakufu,

<http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/index-gai.html>, last accessed 6 September 2018.

**Table One: Favorability rating of major countries (South Korean)**

	March 2018	June 2018
USA	5.64	5.64
China	3.90	4.17
North Korea	3.52	4.71
Japan	3.52	3.55

Source: Public Opinion Studies Program, *Asan Report: U.S.-North Korea Summit and South Koreans' Perceptions of Neighboring Countries*, Asan Institute, July 2018.

The situation also affected popular sentiment in both countries, with public feelings in South Korea and Japan about the other country and its government worsening greatly (**Graph 1, Table 1**); these conditions narrow the scope for either administration to take proactive conciliatory policies toward its counterparts. As a result, there were very few efforts made in either country to take positive steps toward improving relations. That is especially clear if we compare the situation with the Sino–Japanese relationship over the same period. For example, after the situation over the Senkaku Islands worsened in 2010, concerned parties in Japan’s financial sector dispatched several delegations to China. However, no such proactive steps have been taken when it comes to the ROK. The fact that both economic and political worlds have made few moves when it comes to improving Japan–ROK ties speaks to how serious the situation is.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. The First Abe Administration in Comparative Perspective

In the ROK, the cause of the situation, as typified by President Park’s statement quoted above, is usually ascribed to the “rightward tilt” of the Abe administration. Be that as it may, there is an issue here that must be considered. This term marks Abe’s second time as prime minister, and in the seven years since his first administration his political positions regarding his historical views have in fact changed very little. When he was last prime minister in 2006, he was already pro-constitutional revision, favored the application of the right to collective defense, and denied that the so-called comfort women had been forcibly taken from Korea. Thus,

so long as we are comparing the arguments he put forth during these two periods, there has been no further “rightward tilt” in his positions. While he is undeniably a politician who from the start has had right-of-center opinions, it cannot be said that Abe is tilting further to the right.<sup>6</sup>

In any case, I do not plan to discuss Abe’s political propensities themselves in this article. The important issue is that, regardless of the fact that Abe’s political views have changed little since 2006, there is a dramatic difference in how the mass media and the ROK government understand Abe. This evolution is revealed by looking at the sorts of statements that each made when Abe became prime minister for the first time.

The president of the ROK during the first Abe administration was Roh Moo-hyun. President Roh had a particularly hardline stance—even by the standard of ROK leaders—with respect to the territorial issues and problems over the interpretation of history that exist between Japan and the ROK. Examining the the state of Japan–ROK relations during the administration of Abe’s predecessor, Koizumi Jun'ichirō helps make this clear. When President Roh first took office in February 2003, he stressed his desire to not make the historical interpretations issue a flashpoint and made it his goal to restore bilateral ties. However, after the Shimane Prefectural Assembly passed a law declaring a Takeshima (Korean name: Dokdo) Day in March 2005, he began to criticize Japan strongly. When a much-talked about school text created by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform passed the approval process, that orientation became clear. Relations between Tokyo and an ROK that was stepping up its criticism of the Japanese government over the Takeshima/Dokdo issue became explosive in 2006. That April, the Japanese government decided to dispatch a hydrographic survey vessel to waters near the disputed island. President Roh responded by ordering a Korean patrol boat to ram and sink the vessel if it entered a marine area claimed as territorial waters by the ROK. The two countries were truly just a step away from real armed conflict. The Roh administration had also adopted an appeasement policy toward the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) at the time. This, too, placed it in conflict with the Japanese government, which was entangled with Pyongyang over the issue of DPRK abductions of Japanese citizens and had strengthened its economic sanctions. Furthermore, Tokyo and Seoul

had been cornered into a situation in which the two countries' leaders could not even meet, owing to the ROK's refusal to do so. Then, on 15 August 2006, Koizumi forcefully followed through on his previous pledge to make a pilgrimage to the Yasukuni Shrine. The bilateral relationship had reached an impasse.

It was under these circumstances that the first Abe administration took office the following month. Both the ROK government and public opinion viewed this favorably at the time<sup>7</sup>. Immediately after Koizumi had scored an overwhelming victory in the general election held in August 2005, with a central focus on his postal reform project, he let it be known that he planned to resign in September the following year. Seoul saw this forthcoming change of administrations as a good opportunity to improve ties.<sup>8</sup> In fact, fearing that Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni would damage relations with the Abe administration that was soon to take office, in the immediate aftermath the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) issued a statement calling on "responsible Japanese leaders" not to create obstructions in the bilateral relationship a second time words that clearly had implications for the future.<sup>9</sup>

This state of affairs demonstrates the significant expectations that the ROK had of mending ties with Japan when the first Abe administration was officially formed on 26 September 2006. The ROK government issued a statement saying that Japan–ROK ties under the new Tokyo regime would "hinge upon what the Japanese side does. Japan knows quite well what we want."<sup>10</sup> A mere two days into the first Abe government, the two countries agreed on holding a summit meeting. In fact, Seoul had sounded out Abe about a summit even before he was the prime minister, when he was still serving as Koizumi's Chief Cabinet Secretary.<sup>11</sup> Tokyo, too, in a manner meant to satisfy expectations in the ROK, chose both the ROK and China, with which ties had also worsened considerably during the Koizumi years, as the locations of Abe's first overseas trips as prime minister. Abe visited the two countries one after the other on 8–9 October, holding summit meetings in each.

The favorable stance of the Korean media toward the first Abe administration was of a similar vein. Immediately before Abe assumed power, most Korean media organizations voiced their expectations that there would be a summit meeting under his regime while expressing "concerns" about his nationalistic stance.<sup>12</sup> Interest in his government was extremely high. For example, the *Dong-a ilbo*, one of the country's

most influential newspapers, printed an editorial that stated:

This autistic-like attitude of stirring up Japan and closing the door to talks with backward-looking language like President Roh's remarks about "we won't know if we don't try to engage with Japan" should be done away with. We must take note of the fact that even though they are at odds over visits to Yasukuni Shrine, China and Japan are using the practical strategy of trying to build a "win-win" relationship through cases that involve actual benefits. It would not be prudent to nurture the belief in Japan that the ROK stands on the side of China and the DPRK.

The ROK and Japan must both use the opportunity provided by the launch of the Abe Administration to break away from a competition of "closed nationalisms" and seek out approaches for mutual understanding and cooperation in the dimension of long-term joint gains.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. The Differences between 2006 and 2013

As the foregoing suggests, the difference between the early days of the first Abe administration and the second one—which at a glance appear quite similar—is not a matter of either his government's or his personal political orientations. This becomes all the more clear if we look at the greatest problems that were facing Japan-ROK relations before the start of the two respective administrations. As was true under Koizumi, bilateral relations under the government of Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko, which preceded the second Abe regime, had worsened due to a visit to Takeshima/Dokdo by ROK President Lee Myung-huk, the issue of a possible "imperial statement of apology," and further differences of opinion about the comfort women issue. In that sense, after the transition from the Noda to the Abe administrations, there still existed for the ROK side at least the theoretical possibility that the change would be a good opportunity to improve ties between the two countries. In fact, the Japanese government saw the almost-simultaneous formation of the ROK's Park Geun-hye government as an equally favorable opportunity. Immediately after Park's election, Abe sent the Japan-ROK parliamentarians' league director Nukaga

Fukushirō to Seoul as his envoy to test the waters and later repeated the move by sending Deputy Prime Minister Asō Tarō to attend Park’s inauguration ceremony.

The major difference between the first and second Abe administrations actually lies in the stance taken in the ROK toward the new Japanese government. President Park did not grant credentials to Saenuri Party Chair Hwang Woo-yea as his emissary when he was dispatched to Japan on a visit to reciprocate Nukaga’s and gave Asō a chilly reception in his quest to test the waters for a summit meeting.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, a report issued on 27 March by the ROK MoFA officially stated that the government’s “policy regarding problems of historical interpretation was to resolutely deal with them based on principle.” In short, the ROK government made it clear that it was not prepared to be at all conciliatory when it came to historical problems and other outstanding bilateral issues.

The crucial point is that in 2006 the Korean government saw the inauguration of the first Abe administration as a good opportunity for improving relations, but did not have the same mindset in 2013. The same could be said of the Korean media. For example, the *Dong-a ilbo*—which had criticized then President Roh’s “backward looking” policy in 2006 and urged a utilitarian approach to diplomacy with Japan—ran an editorial titled “Concerns over a return to militarism under the ‘Abe LDP’ in Japan” immediately after the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) had scored a crushing victory in the December 2012 general election and Abe as party chair was on track to again become prime minister. The editorial read:

The blueprint for Abe’s return to power contains the tremendous possibility that it will transform Japan into a monster. He has publicly pledged to revise the Constitution, change the Self-Defense Forces into an armed forces, and secure the right to collective self-defense. He has promised to change textbook approval standards and revise the “neighboring country clause” that took Asian nations in the vicinity into consideration. He has issued polemical statements and rebuttals to the effect that there was no coercion directed toward the women drafted into sexual slavery during the militarist era, and has also expressed his intention to elevate the “Takeshima Day” of 22 February established

as an ordinance by Shimane Prefecture to the level of government ceremony. He further posted civil service workers to the Senkaku Islands—which have been the object of a territorial conflict with China, where they are called the Diaoyutai Islands—and emphasized that Japan would be maintaining the local fisheries environment. Abe has titled his package of promises “Taking back Japan,” but his rejection of war responsibility and the kicks he has delivered to neighboring ROK and China make them little more than rubbish.<sup>15</sup>

This editorial is hardly an isolated example in the Korean media in 2013. Not only does it automatically view the formation of the Abe administration as evidence that Japanese society was tilting to the right but it also strongly denounced his government’s policies as dangerous and a threat to the ROK and other Asian nations.

#### 4. The Effects of Generational Change

The question that arises is why there is such an enormous difference in the stances taken by the Korean media to the Abe administrations. Juxtaposed with the stability in Abe’s personal political propensities, the important thing here is that, at least through the early part of 2013, there were no major changes in the basic situation regarding problems over historical interpretation or territorial disputes. Nationalistic textbooks like the one created by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform had repeatedly passed the approval process since 2001, while debate within the LDP calling for reviewing the Kōno and Murayama statements continued as it had before. As to the Yasukuni issue, Abe as prime minister refrained from visiting it until December 2013, although various members of the cabinet did appear at the shrine. The two countries’ stances toward their territorial disputes remained the same, and while the military balance favored the Japanese, that did not mean that the threat toward the ROK had increased.

Regardless, there were numerous reasons for the worsening Japan–ROK relationship. First, the networks connecting the elites in the two countries withered compared to earlier periods. As a result, the level of rapport between their



governments greatly declined. This can easily be understood if we again compare 2006 and 2013. After Korea had been freed from colonial rule, there were regularly many problems in the bilateral relationship. Even so, ties were never completely broken because there were people on both sides working to resolve problems during each crisis. Sejima Ryūzō serves as a prime example; he was employed as a secret envoy in the 1980s when the two countries were tangled up in the fallout from an ROK request for a US\$6 billion loan from Japan.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Narita Yutaka of advertising giant Dentsū served as a kind of pipeline between the two governments in the decade of the 2000s.<sup>17</sup>

However, by 2013 there was no one who could be seen seriously operating in such a capacity between Japan and the ROK, for which there are several reasons. One is the generational change in the elites of both countries. As a former Imperial Army staff officer, Sejima had personal connections in Korea from its time under military rule. For his part, Narita had been born on the Korean Peninsula during the colonial era and had been interested in Japan's relations with its neighbor for his whole life. As the biographies of these two men indicate, many individuals who provided backchannels between Japan and the ROK had once had some sort of connection with the countries' complicated past, dating back to the colonial period. The same situation held true on the Korean side, with the archetypical case being Sejima's counterpart, Kwon Ik-hyon. Secretary General of the ruling party during the Chun Doo-hwan administration, Kwon had been a student at the same time as Sejima at the Imperial Army Academy of Japan. This background again illustrates how the bilateral relationship to some degree was underpinned by the legacies of the past. These conditions persisted until quite recently. Under the Lee Myung-bak administration, Lee's older brother Sang-deuk—born in Japan in 1935 and a former vice-speaker of the National Assembly—played the role of an informal emissary. Lee Sang-deuk had also been chair of a league of Korean and Japanese legislators. His downfall at the end of 2011 in a bribery scandal is said to have also had a decisive effect on parliamentary-level bilateral diplomacy.

However, this elite group that had received its education in Japanese no longer exists in the ROK government. For the first time, the Japan–ROK relationship is now forced to operate without any assistance from the colonial-era generation.

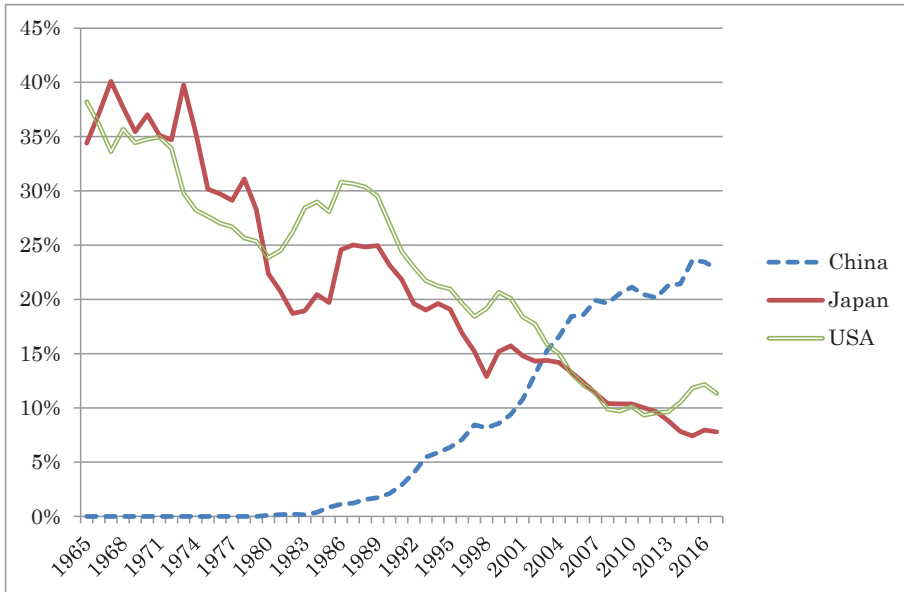
## 5. The Decline in Japan's Importance

While it is possible to explain why the backchannel role played by this older generation has disappeared, it is not clear why new people who could play similar roles have not emerged. The situation in the ROK at that period was an especially important question here, particularly in light of how Seoul refused to be proactive in working with Japan.

The fact that the value of the relationship in both countries has been rapidly declining is of central importance. I have spoken about this in depth in numerous other articles, so I will limit myself to summarizing those points.<sup>18</sup> First, let us consider the issue from an economic perspective; Japan is becoming less important to the Korean economy. Japan's share of the ROK import market stood at about 40% in the 1970s, but in the 2010s it is around only 10% (see **Graph 1**). The reason why the Japanese share has declined is not owing to a slowdown in the Japanese economy, as is often assumed in the ROK, but rather because that share had already fallen considerably in the 1980s, a period in which the Japanese economy shone in the global limelight. For that matter, the U.S. share of imports to the ROK also fell during that same period, from 35% to less than 10%. The ROK once had been an impoverished, developing country standing on the frontlines of the Cold War that did not even have diplomatic relations with either China or the Soviet Union. For that very reason, it could not help but be heavily reliant on both Japan and the U.S. The attendant structure was such that, as the ROK developed economically, the Cold War ended, and the pace of globalization increased, the ROK expanded its international ties dramatically. As a result, it came to be less reliant on Japan and the U.S.

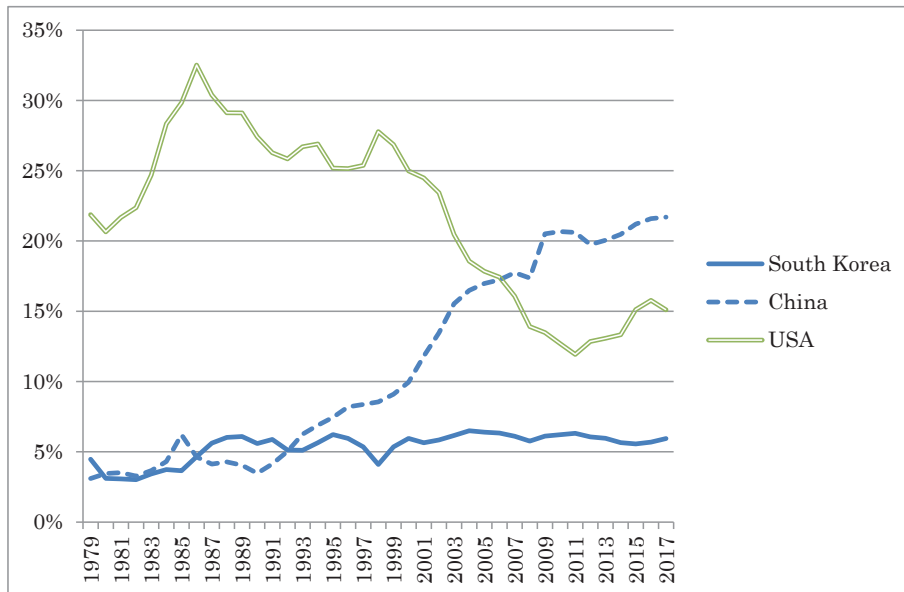
The same could also be said to a certain extent for Japan. The Korean presence in the Japanese mentality may appear to have improved thanks to factors like the "Hanryū" fad of the mid-2000s, but in fact it did not increase as some might have thought. For example, Korean companies' share of the Japanese market remained flat at about 6% (see **Graph 2**). If we ignore certain mobile phone-related businesses, major Korean corporations with a global presence like Samsung, LG, and Hyundai have not achieved much success in Japan.

**Graph Two: Shares of major countries in South Korean Trade (Import Export)**



Source: Statistical Database, [http://kosis.kr/eng/statisticsList/statisticsList\\_01List.jsp?vwcd=MT\\_ETITLE&parmTabId=M\\_01\\_01](http://kosis.kr/eng/statisticsList/statisticsList_01List.jsp?vwcd=MT_ETITLE&parmTabId=M_01_01), last accessed 6 September 2018

**Graph Three: Shares of major countries in Japanese Trade (Import Export)**



Source: Trade Statistic of Japan, Ministry of Finance, [http://www.customs.go.jp/toukei/info/index\\_e.htm](http://www.customs.go.jp/toukei/info/index_e.htm), last accessed 6 September, 2018.

Thus, Japan's economic importance to the ROK was falling while that of the ROK to Japan remained limited. The decline in Japan's economic importance to the ROK is most important. This can be discerned from the fact that the economic angle was completely absent from the aforementioned 2012 *Dong-a ilbo* editorial, whereas its importance had formerly been emphasized. Note also that there was little mention of this aspect in the ROK MoFA report referred to above. That Japan's financial importance had itself declined was well expressed by the fact that the prolonged negotiations over the Japan-ROK currency swap program that took place in 2012 and 2013 were brought to a close because the ROK did not request that they be extended.<sup>19</sup> As globalization continues its steady march, the ROK has seen a rapid increase in the number of countries, like China, with which it can enact currency swap programs. As a result, Japan's importance in this area has also been declining.

This is why neither the government nor the media in the ROK thinks the bilateral relationship must be repaired any time soon, and the same could also be said for what the Japanese government and media think. Additionally, the interdependent relationship between the two countries is gradually becoming more difficult to understand for the general public. The nature of the relationship had been clear in the 1980s, an era when opening the hood on a Hyundai car would reveal an engine emblazoned with the Mitsubishi logo. Of course, today's Samsung Galaxy smartphones have a considerable number of Japanese-made components. However, the average person lacks the skills and knowledge to say which parts are those components, let alone how much of an impact they have on the Galaxy's performance. The interdependent relationship between Japan and the ROK is becoming harder to recognize, and people are losing their ability to detect it.

Given these circumstances, people are not making any efforts to improve bilateral ties. It is difficult to expect individuals in key elites—whether politicians, businessmen, journalists, or intellectuals—to take action in areas that do not generate significant new benefits in light of the fact that those benefits are the single largest factor motivating them. The same can be said for the diplomats handling relations on the ground. If Japan's importance in the ROK is declining, then naturally the status of Japan specialists in that country is also on the wane.<sup>20</sup> Of course, the situation is the same for Korea specialists in Japan. If the fortunes of the "Japan school" and "Korea

school” are both declining, then it is only natural that the backchannels between the two countries will likewise narrow.<sup>21</sup>

## 6. Different Understandings of U.S.–China Relations<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, the same mechanism unfortunately operates in the security field. The key fact here is that the understandings of Northeast Asia in Japan and the ROK at that period were quite different. The greatest such discrepancy involved views of the Sino–U.S. relationship. The Japanese government and many Japanese people saw that relationship as basically oppositional. For this reason, Japan acted as it did based on the calculation that if it opposed China, the U.S. would support Japan.

In contrast, the Park administration had opted for an approach that saw both the U.S. and China as partners. It did not see the Sino–U.S. relationship as absolutely oppositional; rather, it understood the two countries as ultimately aiming for coexistence in a globalizing world. This in turn had given rise to the interpretation that the ROK’s relations with the U.S. would not be greatly damaged by Seoul’s efforts to approach Beijing.

In fact, the position that Seoul should have close ties on a par with being allies with both Washington and Beijing had already been brought up frequently by conservative media in the ROK during the Lee Myung-bak years.<sup>23</sup> Rather than being something unique to the Park administration, the ROK government’s policy of seeing the U.S. and China on equal terms was thus faithful to the views expressed by such leading conservative media organs as the *Chosun ilbo*<sup>24</sup>, *Dong-a ilbo*, and *Joong-ang ilbo*. Meanwhile, these outlets also rapidly cut back on articles theorizing about “the Chinese threat” that had they had frequently printed over the preceding in 2000s.<sup>25</sup> To a certain extent, these were all natural developments, given that the Park administration was itself conservative, as was the party in which it was rooted.

These differences in understanding regarding the Sino–U.S. relationship also had a considerable impact on the mutual understanding between Japan and the ROK. Japan viewed the Northeast Asian order as based on conflicts between the U.S. and China. In that light, it regarded the ROK’s approach toward China as Seoul’s separating itself from the camp that puts the U.S. at the center, or at least

as an attempt at becoming neutral.<sup>26</sup> By contrast, from the ROK perspective, Japan's standoffs with China over territorial disputes and other issues made it a troublemaker between Beijing and Washington.<sup>27</sup>

Such differences of understanding over the Sino-U.S. relationship manifested themselves as hindrances to the relationship between Japan and the ROK. For example, right around the launch of the Park administration, the Japanese government, in accordance with its self-proclaimed "values diplomacy," made an attempt at dialogue with the ROK. On 28 February 2013, exactly three days after Park formed her government, Prime Minister Abe said in a policy speech to the Diet, "The ROK is our most important neighbor, one with which we share such basic values and interests as freedom and democracy. I give a heartfelt welcome to the new president, Park Geun-hye." His message was that Tokyo and Seoul could cooperate because they shared the same Western democratic values and that indeed they *should* cooperate.<sup>28</sup> Behind this move was his expectation that, because Park was from a conservative party, her government would act on the Northeast Asian situation just like his did, based on the understanding that it hinged on a standoff between the U.S. and China.

However, the Park administration did not receive his message favorably, for a very simple reason. Saying that countries with Western democratic values are in solidarity was taken to mean that any such country should work with Japan to deal with a country—namely, China—that does not have them. This was not acceptable to the Park administration, which emphasized friendly ties with China. Accordingly, that administration's response faithfully reflected Korean public opinion, not just the personal inclinations of the president. In fact, a public opinion poll taken in June 2013 on the ROK's relations with China and Japan found that 83.0% of respondents regarded ties with China as more important versus only 11.7% who felt that way about ties with Japan.<sup>29</sup>

The matter of whether the Sino-U.S. relationship was seen as based on conflict or coexistence naturally also had an effect on military cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul. Taking the former position, Japan saw the ROK as also exposed to enormous military pressure from China and expected Seoul would see its ties with Japan as providers of bases to the U.S. military as being extremely important. For

that reason, Tokyo regarded the Korean government's refusal to cooperate militarily with Japan through military intelligence-sharing or munitions support agreements as illogical. However, if Pyongyang rather than Beijing was considered the chief threat in Northeast Asia, there was little that Japan could do. For the ROK, military cooperation with Japan was not something to be rushed into; to the contrary, such an act would only bring unnecessary tension to the Korean Peninsula.

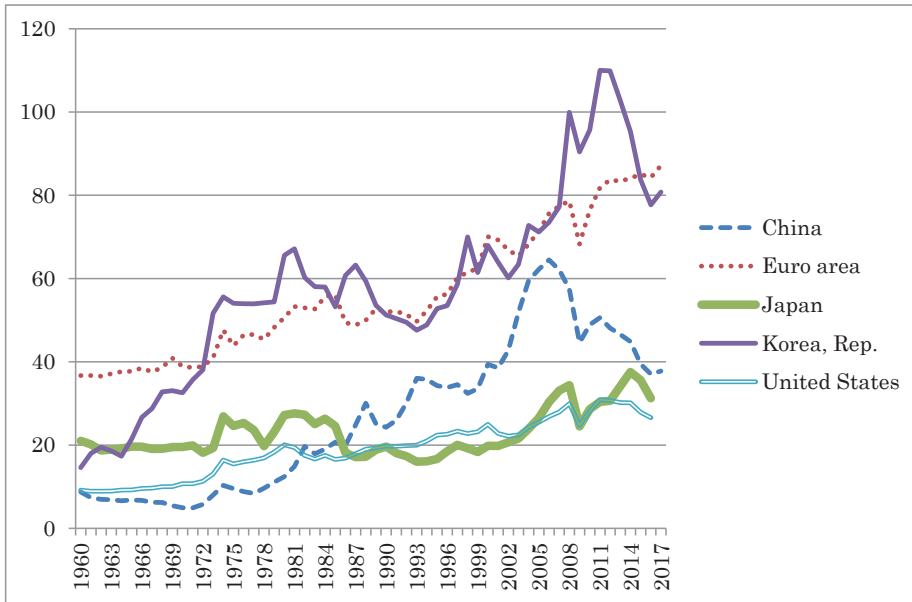
## **7. Differences in the Degree of Dependence on China**

The differences between Japan and the ROK in their understanding of China are also tremendous. At first glance, this may seem curious. For example, the trade data in Graphs 1 and 2 shows that China's current share of the total value of imports and exports for both Japan and the ROK exceeds 20%. Given that the economic importance of China to both countries is similar based solely on this data, it may seem strange that their perceptions of China differ so greatly. However, in fact there is a considerable difference between how the two countries interpret China's importance. Koreans perceive China's presence to be significant, given that it is now the ROK's largest trading partner, and thus as most important engine for their country's economic growth. For many Koreans, then, Japan—with its ongoing standoffs with China over territorial disputes and problems of historical interpretation—seems to be playing the fool. In fact, since the massive anti-Japan protests of 2017, the volume of trade between Japan and China has shrunk, and Japanese corporations are referring to reducing their investments in China.<sup>30</sup>

However, this is a bit of an artificial mechanism. The fact is that, even if China accounts for the same share of each country's trade, there is a vast difference in the importance of Chinese trade to the overall Japanese and Korean economies. Whereas for the ROK the total volume of trade in the 2010s is worth 80% to 100% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), Graph 3 shows the Chinese trade accounts for somewhat less than 20% of Japan's GDP. Chinese trade is so important to the ROK that the fact that it accounts for more than 20% of the ROK's total trade volume means that China accounts for more than 15% of the South Korea's GDP. China has now become a veritable lifeline to the Korean economy. For that reason,

ROK conglomerates and other business entities have close ties with China, and the country’s conservative media regularly calls for boosting bilateral ties. The very fact that Park’s administration is conservative means it will act in ways that are faithful to the tone that the media sets.

**Graph Four: Trade % of GDP**



Source: World Bank Open Data, <https://data.worldbank.org/>, last accessed 6 September, 2018.

For Japan, however, the 20% of total trade that involves China translates to less than 5% of Japan’s GDP, so China for Japan is only about one-quarter as important as the China that the ROK sees (Table 2).

**Table Two: Trade with each partner/GDP (2016)**

	USA	China	Japan	South Korea	GDP(million)	Trade with China/Total
USA	-	3.1%	1.0%	0.6%	18569100	15.9%
China	4.9%	-	2.4%	2.4%	11199145	-
Japan	3.9%	5.4%	-	1.4%	4939384	21.6%
South Korea	7.7%	14.9%	5.0%	-	1411246	23.4%

Source: World Development Indicator, The World Bank, <https://data.worldbank.org/products/wdi>, last accessed 6 September 2018.



Japan and the ROK may seem to resemble one another in many ways, but on this point they currently differ radically. The Japanese economy relies far more than that of the ROK on domestic rather than external demand. Japan remains an economic powerhouse that still boasts the third largest GDP in the world. China may be Japan's largest trading partner, but this does not mean that Japan relies on it exclusively for strategically vital resources like crude oil. Put another way, even if bilateral trade were to fall due to a worsening of relations, its effects on Japan would be limited, and in some cases Japan could fully compensate for those losses by expanding trade with other partners. Many Japanese companies are said to be emphasizing a shift of their production facilities from China to Southeast Asia in the wake of 2017's massive demonstrations in China; in fact, the volume of Japanese investment in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states in the first half of 2013 was double the amount that went to China.<sup>31</sup> For that reason, the current Japanese situation readily produces people who believe precedence should be given to territorial and national pride issues, even if that may cause some harm to relations with China. As a result, an inward-focused Japan will occasionally choose its internal logic over international relations.

This state of affairs also has an impact on power relations between China and each of its Northeast Asian counterparts; the tremendous difference in the GDPs of Japan and the ROK is again important here. As Graph 2 shows, while trade with China may amount to as much as 20% of the ROK's GDP, the reverse is hardly true for China, with the relationship accounting for slightly more than 3% of the Chinese GDP. It is thus easy to understand why an ROK so heavily reliant on its relationship with China puts China in a strong position vis- -vis diplomatic ties with Seoul. In contrast, given the relatively negligible importance for Japan of trade with China, Tokyo can maintain a degree of relative freedom in its diplomatic relations with Beijing.

These differences between Japan and the ROK manifest themselves quite visibly when China adopts a hardline stance. For example, Japan—with its history of heated standoffs with China over the Senkaku Islands—vehemently protested when China expanded its air defense identification zone in November 2013. However, Seoul took an ambiguous position, despite the fact that it has been at odds with Beijing over a reef in the same South China Sea region that it calls Ieodo (known to China as Suyan Islet and as Socotra Rock in the West). One wonders what will happen when

China forces the ROK to make a choice about something truly dear to it. Seoul's position is clearly complicated.<sup>32</sup>

## 8. A Divergence in “Northeast Asian Views” in Japan and Korea

As we have seen so far, at some point there was a tremendous change in the conditions surrounding both Japan and the ROK; for that reason, great differences have emerged in the way each country's people view international relations. The gravest problem here, regardless of the specifics of any given issue, is that neither population fully recognizes the enormous gaps in the understandings of international society in each country that have emerged without their noticing. Tokyo and Seoul, as ever, construct their arguments on the premise that their opposite number views international society through the same lens that it does and bring that opinion into their bilateral relationship.

The Japanese people view the ROK and other Asian countries with a perspective dating to the era when Japan was Asia's only great economic power. For that reason, many have the rudimentary view that the ROK, too, ought to be calling on the economic powerhouse that is Japan if its own economy becomes insecure.<sup>33</sup> In fact, most of the anti-Korean books found lining the shelves of Japanese bookshops read as if the Korean economy is on the verge of collapse and argue that for this reason the ROK will eventually submit to Japan.<sup>34</sup> That perspective is essentially the same as was held during the Asian currency crisis in the late 1990s. Naturally, however, Japan does not loom as large in the ROK as it did then. As was already demonstrated by the dealings that took place surrounding the currency swap agreements, the ROK has more power and confidence than it once did. It is now able to use a variety of backchannels in the international community and can bypass Japan to use a variety of resources. However, many Japanese have overlooked these developments in the ROK, which is why some of the actions of the Korean government and people strike many Japanese as remarkably illogical.

The same thing could be said for the Korean people. China looms quite large for the ROK, so the ROK wants their relations with it to be smooth. As I have already noted several times, the conservative media in the ROK that once was cautious about

China has for the past several years been changing its stance and actively urging friendly bilateral ties. Reviewing the change in tone in the articles about China in the *Chosun ilbo* over this period makes for revealing reading. The once-frequent talk of a China threat has practically disappeared from Korean conservative discourse. Matters have even reached the point that, when it comes to issues like a free trade agreement, even the progressive media seems indecisive about improving ties with China.<sup>35</sup>

Accordingly, from the Korean perspective it is Japan—which did not even try to respond to protest movements that arose in cooperation with the Chinese government over territorial disputes and historical issues—that appeared to be extremely illogical. However, there was a perfectly natural reason for Japan’s behavior. The slump in trade between Japan and China was not having a significant impact on the Japanese economy, at least at that moment.<sup>36</sup> To the contrary, actions that appear to result from concerted action by China and the ROK served to stimulate Japanese nationalism.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, in light of the Japanese view of the Sino–U.S. relationship as adversarial, such moves were interpreted as China’s wielding its economic power to draw the ROK into its camp, with the implication that there would be trouble if the ROK did not comply.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Tokyo became more obstinate, and making political concessions became difficult. If Koreans were not familiar with such details, they would regard Japan’s behavior as simply inexplicable. The end result was the view that Japan was being illogical.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Japan and the ROK regarded one another as illogical and inexplicable, and so the bilateral relationship ultimately was derailed.

Of course, these different perspectives on Northeast Asia were also linked to the forecasts for the future being made in each country; it was not a matter of one side or the other being more correct. Be that as it may, the important issue here is that these different views of the Northeast Asian situation created a major obstacle to the regional diplomacy pursued by the U.S., an ally of both Japan and the ROK. Naturally, the U.S. seeks consistency in its diplomacy. However, the expectations being imposed on it were such that in the long run it would be forced to choose between one country or the other.

The drawbacks for the ROK in this situation were also apparent. China’s expansion of its air defense identification zone in November 2013 and the heightening

of territorial disputes over the Paracel and Spratly island chains could be seen as pushing the U.S. into a standoff with China. Above all, there was a large difference in the status of Japan and the ROK when it came to U.S. security policy. The U.S. has overwhelming naval power, but its land forces are not quite as dominant. With the ROK positioned at the eastern reaches of the Eurasian landmass, it is difficult for the U.S. to protect. This is why the U.S. has spoken repeatedly since the 1970s of withdrawing from the Korean Peninsula. For the U.S., the alliance with the ROK is a relationship that can be adjusted, and from time to time one that it *wants* to adjust.

Japan's importance to the U.S. in this area, however, is completely different. With its economic power and massive naval presence, Japan is a crucial military partner of the U.S. in the region. Most importantly, the geographic location of the Japanese islands makes them both a strategically positioned unsinkable aircraft carrier and an enormous breakwater to hamper any Chinese maritime advances. The continued existence of U.S. bases in Okinawa—despite the many frictions associated with them—provides strong evidence that the U.S. has shown no present intention to withdraw from Japan, unlike the ROK. Indeed, Japan's importance as an ally for the U.S. is increasing. Expressed another way, as a consequence over their geographical locations, while the U.S. cannot protect the ROK without being allied with Japan, it can protect Japan without being allied with the ROK. If that is the case, then given that the U.S. wants to have a base of operations in Northeast Asia, it is probably clear which of the two countries it will ultimately choose to emphasize.

## 9. By Way of Conclusion

Unfortunately, the basic situation between the two countries has not changed, even after the collapse of the Park administration in 2017. Moon Jae-in, who took up the post of president in 2017, has not shown as critical an attitude to Japan as Park did in 2013, but that does not mean that his government is paying serious attention to Korea's relations with Japan. Even sixteen months after taking office, Moon has not made an official visit to Japan outside of a one-day visit to Tokyo, to attend the Japan–China–ROK Trilateral Summit. Moon thus did not visit Japan to attend to the

relationship with Japan itself, despite Abe’s having made an official visit in February 2018 to attend the opening ceremony of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. The Abe administration has also not changed its negative stance toward the ROK since 2013 and has shown no serious interest in improving relations. As of this writing, the Japan–ROK relation appears to have been abandoned by the two governments and is drifting as a result of that abandonment.

However, the important element is that the effects of this worsening in Japan–ROK ties have not only damaged the bilateral relationship but also had a significant effect on ties with other key parties, including with their mutual ally, the U.S. While not a matter of survival, economic relations with the ROK which accounts for 6% of Japan’s foreign trade—are important to the Japanese people. Moreover, in light of the ever-changing Northeast Asian political and security situations, to pointlessly damage relations with a country that has the 11<sup>th</sup> strongest economy in the world and one of the world’s preeminent militaries would also go against Japan’s national interests.

If that is the case, how then should Japan and the ROK deal with their problems? Clearly, each needs to evaluate whether its message is not getting through to the opposite number and where the principles that motivate the other party lie. However, the game that is currently being played between the two countries is completely different. Both are forcing their own principles upon one another and leaving the situation at that. The troublesome issue is that each believes that the hand it has played is effective. What is taking place between Tokyo and Seoul looks like a game of chicken, but the game is actually more vicious. If the game of chicken entails racing one’s car toward the edge of a cliff at top speed in a competition of nerves with one’s rival, it would be a matter of who first slams on the brakes and when. But the game that is being played between Japan and the ROK now is more like a game of chicken on a wide prairie with no cliff. Because there is no cliff, neither party can give the other sufficient reason to slam on the brakes. There is nobody standing between the two calling for an end to this meaningless game, and so they both end up racing endlessly across the plains.<sup>40</sup>

There is something even worse. Since the turn of the century, a variety of problems between Japan and the ROK have been in the air. These include Yasukuni,

textbook revision, comfort women, and territorial disputes. As each issue has emerged, politicians in both countries have denounced their counterparts, and the media in each has leapt forth with extreme language. Democratic citizens' movements on occasion step up their intensity, and more talk than anyone could ever fully keep track of goes back and forth on the Internet.<sup>41</sup>

To offer a somewhat paradoxical explanation, these issues have nevertheless not greatly harmed the economic and social relationships between Japan and the ROK. Over the last two decades, they have co-hosted a soccer World Cup in 2002, and a whirlwind fad for all things Korean swept through Japan. What we have learned over the last ten years is that, even without politicians and other elites taking any active steps toward improving the formal bilateral relationship, no major problems in the short run have arisen in Japan–ROK ties.

Naturally, this means the civil societies in both countries have matured—a fact that in and of itself is positive. These circumstances lend moral support to politicians and members of the chattering classes in both countries and to those people who have always been able to exert an influence on improving the relationship. Many of the problems between Japan and the ROK are closely related to nationalism in each country. For that very reason, many elites stand to lose more than they might gain from involving themselves in these issues. To put it another way, from the perspective of their personal interests it is easy and logical for most people either to not get involved in such problems or to maintain the stance of shoving their principles in the faces of the parties on the other side.

This state of affairs means that most people in both countries are neglecting matters and holding fast to the belief that the hand they are playing will be effective. This is also why both governments are speaking with similar voices. Tokyo talks of forgoing improvements in the bilateral relationship so long as they can improve ties with China, while Seoul talks of gaining the advantage on comfort women and other issues, provided they can summon Western public opinion as an ally. In this prairie-sized game of chicken, each side is trying to set up pitfalls for the other on the course ahead.

However, we cannot conceive of any problems being resolved through this

approach. The party that is led into one of these pitfalls will see its pride wounded, and the deep scars that result from this in the short term, if not the medium and long terms, will cause them to adopt an even more obstinate stance.

The basic fallacy is that both governments have forgotten that diplomacy entails achieving results through negotiations; it is not matter of shoving your cards in the other party's face to determine a winner and a loser. As should also be plain with respect to the issues surrounding the DPRK, it is not easy to force a country to change its political stance simply through sanctions. If we recall that Japan and the ROK have not been able to agree to impose jointly even some of the sanctions on the DPRK that each had imposed on its own, then it is easy to see how their game of chicken is utter nonsense.

What, then, in the end should Japan and the ROK be doing? On this point, we need to distinguish between thinking about short-term problems and thinking about medium-to-long-run ones. In the short term, the leading challenge is the difficult situation in the diplomatic relationship, as the two countries have not even been able to hold a summit meeting. The important thing to think about here—even if it might lead to some backward looking—is to find whatever excuse they need to resume talks. The Japanese and ROK governments currently are engaged in diplomacy based on the premise that the other party is going to fold, while public opinion in each country is taking a hardline stance toward the other country. In light of this, it is difficult to expect much movement with things as they are at present. The two governments need to somehow find some resource that they can use to persuade hardline public opinion in each country. One approach to doing so would be to create the expectation in public opinion that a given situation is moving forward by presenting themselves as “dealing” with whatever issue is at hand. For example, the Japan–Korea Collaborative History Research Committee, which met twice between 2002 and 2010, could resume its activities. This group has focused from time to time on the comfort women issue that is of greatest concern at present between Japan and the ROK.

Naturally, such a development would not automatically mean lead to a dramatic resolution of all the issues in the Japan–ROK relationship. As the two previous rounds

of the Japan–Korea Collaborative History Research Committee meetings show, it will be extremely difficult for the two countries to arrive at a shared historical interpretation based on dialogues between historians and joint research efforts. The problems of history will not be solved solely by historical facts about the “past.” Rather, they will be resolved based on the *context* we use to understand historical facts about that past. For that reason, it will not be easy for Japan and the ROK to have the same historical interpretation of the past, given the different contexts involved.

It goes without saying that this is what makes a “shared history textbook” difficult. The history textbooks in Japan and the ROK are written based on the context of each country’s history, and it is nearly impossible for those two countries to share the same history and outlook on history. To begin with, textbooks are written in accordance with the educational objectives of the countries in which they are created and are thus naturally subject to various regulations based on those objectives and the countries’ educational systems. Given that Japan and the ROK do not share the same basic educational guidelines, we cannot create a “shared mathematics textbook,” let alone a “shared history textbook.”

As I have stressed in this article, the key factor that is ultimately behind the worsening in Japan–ROK ties is structural: Japan is less important to the ROK and the ROK is less important to Japan, with China is emerging to fill the gap. This is why it is not possible to talk about solving problems in the bilateral relationship without talking about how to address this emerging issue. It must not be forgotten that Japan and the ROK, from a global perspective, are both countries with significant economic and military might, and one would expect that they could accomplish many things by cooperating. One possibility is to use concluding free trade agreements as a means to open each other’s markets and bring about economic development. This in turn could be employed to balance the overweening presence of an expanding China in the ROK.

In addition, with globalization now a constant factor, giving thought to the kind of cooperative relationship possible only among neighboring countries is important. Unlike with finance and information, the time constraints that come



with the movement of people are still quite significant. For that reason, among the most important proposals are the creation of more systematic structures for mutual cooperation in times of disaster like those enacted between Japan and the ROK during the Great East Japan Earthquake, or efforts to create the educational and welfare infrastructures needed to cope with falling birthrates and rising elderly populations. The influence that geographical location has on the energy sector is similar. If cooperative structures akin to those in the European Union could be built to accommodate the two countries in terms of pipeline facilities and electric power, the flexibility of each country's energy policies would certainly increase.<sup>42</sup>

The crucial point is that the importance of the bilateral relationship between Japan and the ROK is at question, and we need to summon and employ the wisdom needed to rebuild that importance. The state of the Japan–ROK relationship also constitutes the state of international relations among most of countries in East Asia. The question at hand is how to rebuild cooperative relations in this region, which is changing rapidly with the rise of China and the advance of globalization. What is truly being put to the test, perhaps, is our creativity.

## Notes

- 1 This paper is a revised version of the author's paper written in a domestic language, according to the changing situation after the publications. Original paper is as follows; Kan Kimura, "Shinseikenka no nikkankankei: Nikkan ryokoku wa naze tairitsu suruka" [Why were Japan and Korea at Odds under conservative governments?: Japan–Korea Relations under new governments], *Mondai to Kenkyu*, (December 2013).
- 2 NHK Online, "Kankoku daitōryō: Shunōkaidan ni hiteiteki" [ROK President: Negative about summit talks], 13 September 2013, <<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20130930/k10014925351000.html>>, last accessed: 7 December 2013.
- 3 " Yun-oe-kyo il chi-to-cha si-tae-ch'ak-o-chōk ōn-haeng kae-t'an '" [Foreign Minister Yun: "Anachronistic words and deeds by Japan's leaders are lamentable"], *Dong-a ilbo*, 27 April 2013.
- 4 For example, on 22 October 2013, Abe said, "It would be a mistake to shut off all relations over one problem with our most important neighbor. The door is always open to dialogue, and I hope the ROK will also adopt a similar attitude." NHK Online, "Shushō: Shūdanteki jieiken kōshi wa hō seibi hitsuyō" [Prime minister: Preparations needed for law on use of right to collective self-defense], 22 October 2013, <<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20131022/k10015456881000.html>>, last accessed: 24 October 2013. See also Ministry of Defense, Self-Defense Forces, "Daijin rinji kaiken kiyō" [Extra press conference by the defense

- minister], 29 August 2013, <<http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/kisha/2013/08/29.html>>, last accessed: 24 October 2013.
- 5 For example, Jiji.com, "Ō Yō-fukushushō to kaidan e: 'Fukushushō' wa 2-nen-buri—Nit-Chū keikyō" [Moves toward talks with Vice-Premier Wang Yang: Two years since last vice-premier level talks; Japan-China economic talks], 11 November 2013, <<http://www.jiji.com/jc/zc?k=201311/2013111800542>>, last accessed: 7 December 2013.
- 6 For example, in May 1997 Abe told the Second Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Budget Committee, "The [Kōno] Chief Cabinet Secretary's Statement arose from misinformation. No documents have come forth to prove there was coercion. . . . The premises of the Kōno Statement are crumbling considerably." Similarly, speaking to the Budget Committee itself in February 2006, on the matter of Class-A war criminals Abe said: "In Japan, if we are to ask if they were war criminals, the answer would be they were not." As to the Murayama Statement, he said: "The fact there are issues when it comes to how to define a so-called war of aggression is also only natural. Is it not the case that we still can't say that this has been settled from an academic perspective?" "Rekishī ninshiki 'honno' wa fūin: Abe-shushō, Chū-Kan rekihō hikae" [Affixing his seal of "true feelings" about historical interpretations: Prime Minister Abe, round of visits to ROK, China in offing], *Asahi shinbun*, 5 October 2006.
- 7 "Sōsenkyō shōri de mo rainen 9-gatsu taijin: Koizumi-shushō ga hyōmei" [Resigning next September even if victorious in general election: Prime Minister Koizumi declares], *Asahi shinbun*, 20 August 2005.
- 8 "Chū-Kan, 'Koizumi-gō' o shiya: Asō-shi, sonzaikan apīru—Gaishō kaidan jitsugen" [China, Korea have "post-Koizumi" in sights; Mr. Asō, attractions of presence, holding foreign minister talks], *Asahi shinbun*, 25 May 2006.
- 9 "Koizumi-shushō, Yasukuni sanpai: Chū-Kan 'tsugi de' dakai kitai" [Prime Minister Koizumi, Yasukuni pilgrimage: China, Korea expect breakthrough with "next one"], *Asahi shinbun*, 16 August 2006.
- 10 "Chū-Kan, kankei kaizen ni kitaikan: Abe-naikaku hassoku" [China, Korea feelings of expectation for improved ties, launch of Abe Cabinet], *Asahi shinbun*, 28 September 2006.
- 11 "Chōng-pu, a-pe kwan-pang-chang-kwan-e chōng-sang-hoe-tam t'a-chin" [Government sounds out Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe on summit meeting], *Segye ilbo*, 5 September 2006.
- 12 For example, "Il a-be-si-dae gae-mag/jeon-jaeng-hal su iss-neun na-la-lo gis-bal ol-lyeoss-da" [Japan, open the curtains on the Abe era: Running up the flagpole "Become a nation that can make war"], *Dong-a ilbo*, 21 September 2006; "P'o-lōm: ye-ko-toen a-pe-chōng-kwōn-kwa tae-il oe-kyo-chōn-lyak" [Forum: A preview of the Abe administration's diplomatic strategy toward Japan (*sic.*)], *Munhwa ilbo*, 15 September 2006; and "Sa-sōl: 'a-pe-ūi il-pon' ki-tae-nūn chak-ko kōk-chōng-ūn k'ū-ta" [Editorial: Expectations for "Abe's Japan" few, worries many], *Hankook ilbo*, 21 September 2006.
- 13 "Sa-sōl: a-pe-si-tae, han-il 'tat-hin min-chok-chu-ūi' t'al-p'i-hae-ya" [Editorial: Abe era, shed the "closed democracy" of Korea-Japan], *ITALICS-Dong-a ilbo*, 21 September 2006. Korean newspaper articles prior to 2010 cited in this article were found by doing a general article search at the Korea Press Foundation website, <<http://www.kinds.or.kr/>>, last accessed: 7 December 2013.
- 14 However, it is also possible to analyze these talks between Park and Asō as having had a considerable impact on the subsequent Japan–ROK relationship due to the grave injury to Park's sentiments that Asō's remarks on historical interpretations had. "Nik-Kan masatsu, ichiban no riyū wa Paku Kune-daitōryō

- no kirenaga na manazashi no ikari" [Japan–ROK frictions, biggest reason is President Park's narrow-eyed wrath], *ITALICS-Sankei shinbun*, 29 April 2013.
- 15 "Sa-sōl: il 'a-pe cha-min-tang' kun-kuk hoe-kwi-lül u-lyō-han-ta" [Editorial: Concerns over a return to militarism under the 'Abe LDP' in Japan], *Dong-a ilbo*, 17 December 2013.
- 16 On this point, see Nakasone Yasuhiro, "Kantō zuisō—Sejima Ryūzō-san to watashi: Sengō Nippon no saikōchiku, Nik-Kan kankei shūfuku no koto" [Prefatory thoughts—Sejima Ryūzō and I: On the postwar rebuilding of Japan and restoration of Japan–ROK relations], *Kihō: Heisei 20-nen "Seijma Ryūzō tokushū*, vol. 36. See also Ogura Kazuo, *Hiroku: NikKan itchō-en shikin* [Confidential papers: One trillion-yen loan between Japan and Korea, Kōdansha, 2013.
- 17 "Dentsū gen-shachō Naritaka Yutaka-shi ga shibō: Nik-Kan W-hai kyōsai o ato-oshi" [Former Dentsū president Naritaka Yutaka dies, was booster of joint Japan–Korea World Cup], *Sankei shinbun*, 21 November 2011.
- 18 For further details on the impact that this mutual lowered importance had on Japan–ROK relations, please see my articles "Nationalistic Populism in Democratic Countries of East Asia," *Journal of Korean Politics* 16:2 (2007); "Why Are the Issues of 'Historical Perceptions' between Japan and South Korea Persisting?," *Kokusai kyōryoku ronshū* 19:1 (July 2011); and "How Can We Cope with Historical Disputes?: The Japanese and South Korean Experience," in *Changing Power Relations in Northeast Asia*, ed. Marie Söderberg, Routledge, 2010.
- 19 Government of Japan, Ministry of Finance, "Nikokukan tsūka suwappu no jigenteki na zōgaku bubun no shūryō ni tsuite" [Regarding the end of time-limited increased portion in the Japan–ROK bilateral currency swap arrangement], 9 October 2012, <[http://www.mof.go.jp/international\\_policy/financial\\_cooperation\\_in\\_asia/bsa/swap\\_korea\\_houdou\\_20121009.htm](http://www.mof.go.jp/international_policy/financial_cooperation_in_asia/bsa/swap_korea_houdou_20121009.htm)>, last accessed: 7 December 2013; and idem, "30-oku doru sōtō no Nik-Kan tsūka suwappu torikime o shūryō shimasu" [US\$3 billion Japan–Korea currency swap arrangement to end], 24 June 2013, <[http://www.mof.go.jp/international\\_policy/financial\\_cooperation\\_in\\_asia/swap/swap\\_korea\\_houdou\\_20130624.htm](http://www.mof.go.jp/international_policy/financial_cooperation_in_asia/swap/swap_korea_houdou_20130624.htm)>, last accessed: 7 December 2013.
- 20 "Oe-kyo-pu kwōn-lyōk i-tong: chae-p'aen-sū-k'ul chi-ko ch'a-i-na-sū-k'ul ttūn-ta" [Power shift in diplomatic section: Japan School ebbing, China School rising], *Joong-ang ilbo*, 23 April 2013.
- 21 On this point, please also see "Takehima jōriku, fuiuchi: Tai-Nichi kyōkō rosen ni ikioi—Kankoku daitōryō shūin, chi-Nichi-ha kie" [Surprise landing on Takehima: Anti-Japan hardline track showing vitality—Pro-Japan circles around Korean president disappear], *Asahi shinbun*, 11 August 2012.
- 22 For details regarding the following two paragraphs, please see my article "Kankoku wa naze Chūgoku ni kyūsekkin suru no ka" [Why is Korea suddenly drawing close to China?], *Ajia nippon*, June 2013.
- 23 "'Yōn-mi-hwa-chung' -ül nōm-ō 'yōn-mi-yūn-chung' -ū-lo" [Going beyond "Ally with U.S., peace with China" to "Ally with U.S. and China"], *Dong-a ilbo*, 13 June 2012; and "Han-chung su-kyo 18chu-nyōn chōn-mun-ka in-t'ō-pyu" [Interview with specialists to mark 18 years of Korean-Chinese friendship], *Jōong-ang ilbo*, 26 August 2010.
- 24 For example, "Yang-ta-li oe-kyo" [Bifurcated diplomacy], *Chosun ilbo*, 7 April 2013.
- 25 Contrariwise, as can be seen from "Hanjungugyo 20nyōn: inch'ōn chunggukūl tashi poda - chunggugūi palchōnūn uriege wihyōpchōgin'ga?" [20 years of Korean-Chinese friendship and Incheon: "Rediscovering China pt. 6"—Is China's development a threat to us?], *Kyeongin ilbo*, 21 February 2012, more and more are

- clearly rejecting the "China threat" thesis accompanying its economic development and instead arguing that its growth "must be taken as an opportunity."
- 26 "Chūgoku no torikomi keikai o' Sankei / 'Kaku-mondai de Chū-Kan wa fuitchi' Mai-Yomi" ["Be vigilant about how China operates": *Sankei*, "China, Korea not in agreement over nuclear issue": *Mainichi and Yomiuri*], *Sankei shinbun*, 22 August 2013.
- 27 For example, Park Chang-hee, "Mi-chung-kwan-kye-wa han-pan-to: mi-kuk-ūi 'chōn-lyak-chōk chae-kyun-hyōng' -ūl chung-sim-ū-lo" [The Sino-U.S. relationship and the Korean Peninsula: With a focus on the U.S.'s "strategic realignment"], in Suk-myōng-an-po-hak-yōn-ku-so, *Yōn-lye-t' ūk-pyōl-hak-sul-tae-hoe han-pan-to an-po-ūi sae-lo-un chi-p'yōn* [Sookmyung Institute for Security Studies annual special academic conference: New horizons in Korean Peninsula security], 2012, <<http://www.kinu.or.kr/upload/neoboard/KNEVENT/%C0%DA%B7%E1%C1%FD2.pdf>>, last accessed: 7 December 2013.
- 28 "Abe-shushō no shisaku hōshin ensetsu" [Prime Minister Abe's policy speech], *Asahi shinbun*, 1 March 2013.
- 29 Realmeter, "'Han-chung chōng-sang-hoe-tam ki-tae-toen-ta ", 74.4%" ["Hopes for a Korea-China summit" 74.4%], <[http://www.realmeter.net/issue/view.asp?Table\\_Name=s\\_news2&N\\_Num=862&file\\_name=20130626130027.htm&Cpage=1](http://www.realmeter.net/issue/view.asp?Table_Name=s_news2&N_Num=862&file_name=20130626130027.htm&Cpage=1)>, last accessed: 7 December 2013.
- 30 For example, "Il-pon sa-sang ch'oe-tae mu-yōk-chōk-cha: tae-chung-kuk su-ch'ul kam-so-ka kyōl-chōng-t'a 일본 사상 최대 무역적자 ... 대중국 수출 감소가 결정타" [Largest trade deficit in Japanese history: Fall in exports to China a decisive blow], *Joong-ang ilbo*, 23 October 2012.
- 31 Japan External Trade Organization, *Jetoro sekai boeki tōshi hōkoku* 2013 [JETRO global trade and investment report 2013], 2013, <<http://www.jetro.go.jp/world/gtir/2013/>>, last accessed: 7 December 2013. See also *Sankei shinbun*, 8 August 2013.
- 32 Chosun Online (Japanese version), "Kankoku no bōkū shikibetsu-ken, Ieodo o fukumanai mittsu no riyū" [Three reasons why Socotra Rock is not included in Korea's air-defense identification zone], 25 November 2013, <[http://www.chosunonline.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2013/11/26/2013112600945.html](http://www.chosunonline.com/site/data/html_dir/2013/11/26/2013112600945.html)>, last accessed: 7 December 2013.
- 33 Ekonomikkusu nyūsu, "Chūgoku keizai kyū-gensoku, won-daka de Kankoku keizai kikikan zōfuku" [Sense of crisis amplified by Chinese economy's rapid decline, rise in Korean won], <[http://headlines.yahoo.co.jp/hl?a=20130810-00000067-economic-bus\\_all](http://headlines.yahoo.co.jp/hl?a=20130810-00000067-economic-bus_all)>, last accessed: 7 December 2013.
- 34 For example, Mitsuhashi Takaaki, *Iyoioyō, Kankoku keizai ga hōkai suru kore dake no riyū* [So many reasons why the Korean economy is ready to collapse], Wakku, 2013.
- 35 I plan to discuss in greater detail elsewhere the changes in perceptions of China in Korea's conservative media.
- 36 Mitsubishi UFJ Research and Consulting Economic Research Division, *Nihon keizai no keiki dōkō-nado ni kansuru shiryō* [Materials on trends in the Japanese economy], September 2013, <<http://www.rinya.maff.go.jp/j/riyō/jyūkyū/pdf/2013092501.pdf>>, last accessed: 7 December 2013. In fact, during the first half of 2013 support for economic growth came from domestic demand far surpassing that of external demand.
- 37 "Chū-Kan shunō kaidan: Nihon ni towareru Higashi Ajia senryaku" [China-Korea summit: East Asia strategy questioned by Japan], *Yomiuri shinbun*, 30 June 2013.
- 38 For example, "Shuchō—Paku-daitōryō hō-Chū: Nichi-Bei to no kessoku koso jūyō da" [President Park's

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- 39 For example, "Chōng-pu 'chip-tan-chōk cha-wi-kwōn-e tae-han ki-pon-ip-chang, il-e chōn-tal' 정" [Government: Basic stance on "collective defense" conveyed to Japan], *Yonhap News*, 22 October 2013, <<http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/politics/2013/10/22/0503000000AKR20131022142700043.HTML>>, last accessed: 7 December 2013.
- 40 On this point, please also see "Kinchō tsuzuku Nit-Chū-Kan 'chikingēmu'" [The Japan-China-Korea game of chicken remains tense], *AERA*, 7 October 2013.
- 41 Regarding the course of developments over problems of historical interpretation, please see my article, "Discovery of Disputes: Collective Memories on Textbooks and Japanese–South Korean Relations," *Journal of Korean Studies* 17:1 (Spring 2012). See also my article, "Nik-Kan rekishi ninshiki mondai ni dō mukiau ka" [How are we to face up to the problems of historical interpretation between Japan and Korea?], *Kiwameru* (Minerva shobō).
- 42 On this point, please refer to my article, "Northeast Asian Trilateral Cooperation in a Globalizing World: How to Re-establish Mutual Importance," *Kokusai kyōryoku ronshū* 21:2 (2014)

