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Regional Community Formation: National Identity, Migration, and the Rise of China

South Korean National Identity Gaps with China and Japan

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Read the Chinese Internet and mainstream publications, and you will find virulent charges against South Korean attitudes toward China.[1] Peruse even a small sample of a vast outpouring of Japanese popular books on South Korea or previous copies of *Sankei shimbun*, and you cannot miss the hyperbolic accusations against South Korean attitudes toward Japan.[2] Both nations' sources often attribute to the South Korean public obsessive emotional reactions to historical memories and cultural issues.[3] At the same time, Korean sources find the Chinese Internet replete with intense emotionalism toward South Korea and charge Japanese with skewed perceptions of history and of Korean culture.[4] The culture wars are not receding in East Asia despite the widened divide over security issues, such as North Korea's nuclear threat, and the uncertain state of economic growth at a time when China's development model has begun to teeter a little and the world's financial picture remains cloudy. How do we explain the current preoccupation with the national identity divide in both Sino-South Korean and Japanese-South Korean relations?

In 2002 the progressive candidate Roh Moo-hyun was elected president on a wave of anti-Americanism. From 2004, South Korean-Chinese relations began a downward spiral over different perceptions of the nature of the ancient Koguryo state. In 2005 Roh's anger with Japan led him to question the entire course of normalization over forty years. Echoes of each of these outbursts were heard periodically in later years, for instance, in 2008 when China's pre-Olympics "sacred torch parade" through Seoul rekindled distrust on both sides and as Japan's claim to sovereignty over the tiny Dokdo/Takeshima Island aroused South Koreans anew. Descriptive accounts abound of such emotions in East Asia. The challenge is to systematize analysis of these divisions and how they keep impacting international relations. Centering on South Korea's ties with its neighbors, this chapter highlights sociological factors that keep undergirding international relations in East Asia.

The concept of national identity has gained increasing popularity since the end of the Cold War, applied to the countries of East Asia by social scientists of many orientations and diverse disciplines. Few would doubt its salience in the bilateral disputes that keep inflaming emotions in this region. Yet, there is scant attention on analyzing the interrelationship of the national identities of two countries based on comparisons of pairs of identities and examination of the interplay within each pair. Here I take South Korea as the common denominator, assessing the recent character of Sino-South Korean and Japanese-South Korean national identity gaps.[5] Keeping the focus on the vertical dimension of identity, which refers to self-images of what makes the inner-workings of a country distinctive, I highlight domestic factors that impact international relations. Also, I draw attention to cultural national identity and its linkages with economic and political national identity, which are lumped together as the sectoral dimension. The identity gaps between South Korea and its two neighbors remain wide, putting these relationships at risk, as seen in recurrent tensions couched unmistakably in identity terms, notably in the mass media.

In this analysis national identity is defined as beliefs about what makes one's state unique in the past, present, and future. A national identity gap is considered to be a divide separating two states, where at least one considers the other salient to its national identity. Whereas most discussions of identity gaps in East Asia center on the temporal dimension, which refers to views of history, the approach here is based on differentiating as many as six dimensions. The horizontal dimension refers to views of the outside, including the international community, regionalism, and relations with the United States. Second to the temporal dimension, this is the most widespread in writings on East Asian bilateral relations. Another dimension is ideological, which has figured less importantly in recent years even if it seems to be gaining some traction in China again. Together the gaps observed for these three dimensions plus the vertical and sectoral dimensions of special interest here, combine into what I call the intensity dimension. Separately, I have estimated that the intensity of the national identity gaps between China and Japan and between China and South Korea have grown much wider in recent years, while that between Japan and South Korea began to narrow, but haltingly.[6] Focusing on two identity dimensions, this chapter views the two divergent identity gaps involving South Korea, largely setting aside the Sino-Japanese national identity gap.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT AND NATIONAL IDENTITY STUDIES IN EAST ASIA

Sociology has long highlighted collective identities and the impact of the state on them. Whether one is prioritizing social class identity, racial and ethnic identities, or civil society, there is a pattern of assessing how a state's identity reinforces or restricts expression of intermediate identities that can serve to limit the state's authority and reach. Interest in East Asian collective identities proceeds in the shadow of recognition of the dominance of inflated state identities. This is the case for China, Japan, and South Korea. Communist rule in China boosts state identity further, while democracies are characteristically tolerant of collective identities.

National identity factors appeared to be eclipsed in post-Cold War East Asia except when aroused by Japanese leaders, such as in visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. For at least a decade after normalization of Sino-South Korean relations, both sides avoided mention of ideological, historical, political, and cultural divisions that could prove sensitive to the other state. When the Koguryo issue flared in 2004, they agreed to dampen its impact, as if it were some aberrant problem that did not reflect an actual national identity gap. In 1998 and again in 2008, new rapport between Japanese and South Korean leaders likewise promised to overcome bilateral strains. It focused on the future rather than the past, and on shared national interests best tackled together, such as economic and security problems. Even in the aftermath of tensions over the Yasukuni visits, Chinese and Japanese leaders vowed to refocus relations, as leaders pointed to cultural overlap rather than divisions.[7] Yet, powerful political forces were unwilling to narrow national identity gaps, and deep domestic cleavages ensured that they would resurface with even greater force at a later time.

South Korea is sandwiched between two states, which, one after the other, became obsessed with the superiority of their way of organizing society against the background of deep misgivings about some lagging characteristics. Japan's spike in national identity occurred in the second half of the 1980s. Trailing by about twenty-five years, China's spike is still pronounced in 2012 after receiving a jolt upward during the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Chinese and Japanese arrogance is manifested in ideological leanings inimical to closer relations with South Korea, historical memories that clash sharply with those of Koreans, and interpretations of cultural, economic, and political identity that distance their states from South Korea rather than leading toward convergence.[8] Above all, the identity spike in each country reflected rising confidence in the state's role in society at the expense of many other collective identities. This vertical dimension put trust with South Korea in jeopardy in unexpected ways. To appreciate the dynamics of bilateral relations it is essential to add South Korean national identity to the picture, treating both relationships.

Sociologists were among many observers who sought the key to Japan's unique identity in the 1970s through 1990s. Nakane Chie, S. N. Eisenstadt, and Seymour Martin Lipset are among this group.[9] In the case of China's exceptionalism, Martin King Whyte, Thomas Gold, and Jonathan Unger, number among the sociologists who have searched for the crux of differences, and Ezra Vogel took an interest in both states.[10] For South Korea, the numbers remain smaller, but the sociologist Gi-wook Shin has energetically been filling the vacuum.[11] In each of these cases, political scientists, anthropologists, and historians are also prominent in the long list of those writing about national identity from what may be regarded as a sociological perspective, but few have turned their attention to international relations. Shin is a rare exception in scrutinizing the South Korean-U.S. relationship as a reflection of identities.[12]

In East Asia popular writings are much enamored of the subject of mutual images and distrust. The Japanese-South Korean divide has aroused interest for decades.[13] While there is no dearth of public opinion data mapping the evolution of perceptions and many have discussed the political context, systematic examination of national identities rarely occurs. The most common perspective is found in books by rightwing Japanese explaining South Koreans' thinking that damages relations.[14] The Chinese-South Korean divide recently has also drawn attention.[15] Newspapers again take the lead as scholarly articles cover the political background too. Identity is often mentioned, but without systematic assessment of how it operates, especially in light of the resurgence of this sharp post Cold War divide.

The field of national identity extends across disciplines. Social psychology draws attention to self-identity, contrasting group orientation and the salience of "face" in East Asia with individualism in the United States.[16] Constructivist theory in the study of international relations stresses subjectivity, whereby perceptions shape policy choices, as when East Asians look through the lens of alleged victimization.[17] Historical writings on memory reveal an identity component, which is recognized as playing an enduring role in East Asian countries steeped in historical legitimation.[18] In sociology all of these perspectives are present,

complementing attentiveness to the way collective identities overlap or conflict. In the study of East Asian societies identities focused on the nation are often seen as so important that they are treated along side each of the various collective identities in the search for explanations.

In succession, social scientists have grasped for the essence of the multiple identities in Japan, South Korea, and China. In the 1980s they became obsessed with state-society relations: vertical society, paternalistic firms shaped by administrative guidance, loss of individualism to some sense of a homogeneous people together as a "new middle mass," weakness of civil society due to acceptance of "Japan, Inc.," and Japan-U.S. comparisons suggesting reasons for Japan's high level of conformity but low deviance.[19] *Nihonjinron* (the theory of Japaneseness) heralded uniqueness,[20] as writings on Japan's modernization pointed to why convergence with the West has been relatively limited. In contradictory trends over the following two decades after self-confidence in uniqueness was shaken by Japan's rapid economic and political descent while bluster about revisionism came more into the open with support from top LDP leaders, social scientists recognized the salience of national identity, cataloguing its diversity.[21] In power, the DPJ reemphasized Asianism and, briefly, forthrightly challenged the U.S. alliance as the foundation of international identity without clarifying confusion over Japan's identity, which continues today.[22]

The debate over South Korean national identity has more narrowly centered on the predominance of Koreanness associated with ethnic homogeneity and also bloodlines, and the rise of a civic identity combining democratic and universal values.[23] Given significant adjustments in recent years, there has also been close attention shown to the effect of election results that bring strong-willed presidents to office,[24] two conservatives and two progressives over the past two decades. The impact of national identity on relations with Japan has long been appreciated and the power of anti-Americanism as a form of national identity came to the fore in the early 2000s,[25] but these themes have not been placed within a broad framework of national identity gaps and how they may be at the root of international tensions.

Lately Chinese national identity has attracted the most attention, because of both fascination with China's development model (the "Beijing Consensus") and uncertainty over its approach to international relations ("harmonious world").[26] There has been much discussion of rising arrogance,[27] fed by both the Internet and government policies often interpreted in an extreme manner within China. Chinese views of Japan and the United States are often perceived as responses to particular issues rather than part of national identity construction, which involves multiple dimensions and is coordinated in its effect. The framework of national identity gaps can serve to assess how Chinese identity systematically impacts foreign relations.

By showcasing the vertical dimension of identity and cultural national identity, I seek to build on the research centered on sociological themes. Japanese, South Koreans, and Chinese face cleavages associated with one-sided macro-level identities with little room for intermediate level identities. Japanese and South

Koreans' withdrawal of support from their elected leaders reveals high levels of dissatisfaction not only with the way a particular leader governed, but with the structure of state-society relations. Discontent in China with the party-state's unresponsiveness to social needs has apparently been rising sharply. As reflected in internal identity, these problems reverberate in identity gaps of widening intensity, which can be traced back to ways of thinking from premodern times and to the transformation of the hierarchy of nations during the transition to modernity.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO NATIONAL IDENTITY GAPS IN EAST ASIA

Wars between China and Japan and between either of these two countries and Korea were rare over the half millennium prior to the 1890s. Economic relations were of minor importance, especially in the final premodern centuries. Relations were perceived through a long-term cultural framework. China considered itself the center of civilization. Korea saw itself as the cultural link that had transferred from China and its own past the civilization on which Japan had evolved. By the eighteenth century when Koreans were questioning whether they had surpassed China as a Confucian civilization, Japanese were distancing themselves from China and Korea by emphasizing their indigenous cultural roots. Claims to superiority were being challenged, even as they were deeply felt in an environment where civilizational identity was primary. China took little regard of these trends, and the arrival of the West refocused discussions of civilizational superiority. Yet, as the shadow of the West receded, hierarchical assumptions within East Asia resurfaced.

Japan's thirty-five-year annexation of Korea and fourteen-year invasion of China cast doubt on the longstanding cultural hierarchy of East Asia. Its shift from tolerance of rising ethnic national identity (*minjok*) to cultural genocide against Koreans aroused a strong backlash of Korean cultural humiliation, fueling pride.[28] Later South Korean leaders reinforced this pride, as they vied for legitimacy in the face of clashing North Korean claims and failed support for democratic norms. Even after democratization, the weight of cultural identity and Koreanness well exceeded that of civic identity. In the case of China, Japan left a trail of resentment, which Chinese leaders tapped with some caution until the 1990s. For political reasons, they also hesitated until around 2005 to capitalize on cultural wounds opened by South Korea's alliance with the United States and superiority complex owing to its greater modernization and democratization. Yet, arousing a strong sense of cultural national identity, Chinese sources eventually demonized both Japan and South Korea in a sweeping manner.

For one thousand years until the mid-nineteenth century China considered Japan inconsequential, better than the barbarians due to sincere efforts to borrow Confucian culture but not fully civilized, given its samurai culture and peripheral status. In turn, the Japanese had recognized China as the center of civilization, but increasingly cast doubt on that as they began to search back in their own past for alternative roots and questioned whether China under the Manchus remained true to its own heritage. With the earlier modernization of Japan under the impact of the West, this assertive claim to now having surpassed China left

confusion as to Japan's rightful role in Asia. Grasping for an international identity even as it uncomfortably acknowledged being behind the Western powers, Japan sought an Asian identity as regional leader—although this role came with conflicting expectations. After winning the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan's newly risen self-confidence came with growing resentment against purported denial of the fruits of its victories. In this unsettled mindset, many twisted their internationalist identity to stress an unfair and cutthroat global order in which U.S. idealism and later the League of Nations counted for little.[29] Simultaneously, Japanese debated the meaning of Asianism centered on their country's relations with China. Not able in the postwar era to reach any consensus on the nature of Sino-Japanese relations to 1945, Japanese were still struggling to define and combine internationalism and Asianism as factors in their own national identity during the post-Cold War era.[30]

As long as Japanese perceived China to be trailing, the debate about how to deal with it continued to center on the virtues in teaching and assisting it and the benefits of representing it and asserting regional leadership. Yet, insistence in China on a national identity in opposition to Japan's self-image caused complications. After the May Fourth Movement responded to Japan's WWI demands for territorial and other concessions that impinged on sovereignty, anti-imperialist claims by the Chinese Communist Party in the struggle against Japan's aggression left a legacy of demonizing Japan, controlled for a time but exacerbated by the absence of a genuine apology even after normalization in 1972. With the Cold War putting limits on the global order and China deemed economically backward to the early 1990s, Japanese could be patient about their own uncertainty over Asianism and China's criticisms over history. A different situation arose from the mid-90s.[31] How could Japan make clear its superiority over a rapidly rising China? Would it be able to clarify Asianism and internationalism (now linked to globalization) in ways that bolstered a national identity limiting China's challenge? Views of South Korea faced similar uncertainty.

Public opinion polls repeatedly show that Japan's image in China as well as in South Korea contrasts with its image in Southeast Asia and much of the rest of the world. Elsewhere it is seen largely through an economic prism as a great power that for decades has manufactured high-quality exports of desired consumer durables, while in China more than anywhere else it appears as a country unable to come to grips with its past transgressions or to emphasize improved relations with Asia.[32] After particularly negative images in 2005, Japanese finally recognized some improvement in 2007 as cherry trees became a more widely noted symbol in Chinese polls while the Nanjing massacre and Yasukuni Shrine slipped somewhat; yet with the approaching seventieth anniversary of the massacre and many movies about to be released, commentators were not confident. Indeed, *Sankei shimbun* reported that China's aim was to portray Japan as not virtuous so it could achieve regional hegemony, while striving to weaken U.S.- Japan relations.[33]

In 1992 Chinese discussions of Japan were preoccupied with the challenge of predicting Japan's rise as a great power. Before the turnabout of Japan's stagnation and China's rise became clear, the post Cold War, post Soviet Union collapse steered

China's leaders to promote assessments of Japan's chances of emerging as the leader of Asia and a more equal partner of the United States. On August 14 the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Japan Institute organized a roundtable on Japan's moves to become a great power. It concluded that the United States could not long maintain its spot as the lone superpower, the competition would intensify with the other two advanced capitalist poles of the European Union and Japan, and Japan would press to establish its own regional sphere. This means a competition in Asia to which China would have to respond. Participants concluded, however, that stability would prevail, economic growth and regional integration would stay on the upswing, and Japan's economic leadership would not be converted into political leadership due to its historical legacy. One reason given was that Russia still retained great potential influence, and Japan would have to improve ties with it in order to assert leadership. Another was that Japan would still need to rely on the United States, which has more overall power. Despite limits, it was argued that Japan would strive to assert its voice as a political and military power, while seeking a permanent seat on the Security Council. At the same time, it would foster ties with China in order to build a base in Asia as one of the three world centers of capitalism, while it was also gaining leadership in Southeast Asia. Yet, such ties would not stand in the way of aspirations for a military great power position and a rightward drift in political thought. In these circumstances, participants called for China to harden its thinking toward Japan and develop a strategy to counter it, making use of Japan-U.S. contradictions. China can develop good relations, owing to Japan's need for it, toughening, at the same time, resistance to Japan's great power aspirations, widening an identity gap.[34]

Japanese revisionists capitalized on frustrations over Japan's sinking standing in the 1990s after the "bubble economy" collapsed, seeking pride in a more positive image of long-criticized historical conduct. Chinese hardliners redirected frustrations over the Communist Party's ignoble record, including the Tiananmen massacre, by reopening the wounds left from 1945. In this context, South Korean presidents who began their tenure with high hopes for improving relations with Japan found Korean public opinion leaning toward demonization of Japan and opposition parties poised to pounce on any weakness.

The nature of cultural and vertical national identity in South Korea is a factor in the wide identity gaps with two neighboring states. *Minjok* is extremely tenacious. It was the driving force in rising national identity in response to Japanese colonialism and, later, cultural genocide. There was no other outlet for the colonized Koreans. As democracy was suppressed by dictators, it filled the vacuum, benefiting when dictators sought to use it to bolster their authority and to counter claims to legitimacy by North Korea. In the post-Cold War era, democratically elected leaders also turned to "Koreanness" as grounds for increasing their popularity and a defense against rapid opening of the country to globalization. After progressives gained power, no less emphasis was placed on such appeals. The Sunshine policy raised reunification hopes that stimulated minjok identity and, when hopes were dashed, accompanied a rise in frustration that the South had been marginalized in dealing with a breakdown in the talks and the North's belligerence. Over a century of *minjok* and identity limitations in the post-Cold War era, one sees signs that failure to resolve what is perceived as

severe social injustice leaves people grasping for an authentic presentation of their collective will. Despite continued economic growth and measures of inequality not inferior to those in many developed states, South Korea faces symbols of injustice of great emotional impact, which shape the electoral environment.

Three themes stand out as sources of frustration about social injustice. First, there is perceived unfairness in social mobility centered on unequal access to English language training and education to bypass the bottleneck of entrance to the top-ranked universities, which are the gateway to the most preferred jobs in large corporations and government. Second, there is an unusually high level of corruption for an advanced, democratic state, which is associated with favoritism based on common background, including regionalism. Third, there is a strong sense of uneven modernization and globalization, as select firms rank in the top echelon of international competition, while most small and middle-sized firms are vulnerable to greater competition without protection from a welfare safety net.

Manifestations of these extreme forms of social injustice include desperate moves to gain an advantage in education, such as an extraordinary number of *kirogi* (wild geese), who have sacrificed family life to education abroad. Separated family members abound in this scramble to gain a mobility edge leading to Korean or foreign universities. Voting in near unison on the basis of regional identities inside South Korea is another unusual feature of an advanced, democratic state. This relates to concern that the person elected as president will favor one region, the southeast or the southwest. Also, charges of injustice are widespread in regard to manipulation of housing prices, relatives of presidents using influence in return for payments, and some industries favored at the expense of others.

The meaning of Koreanness may have become fuzzier recently, but that does not mean it no longer applies. At the top of the social ladder are Korean Koreans and Korean Americans. Next are Korean Japanese. At the bottom are Korean Chinese or non-Koreans married to rural Koreans or others who in desperation went outside to find a spouse. In the absence of multiculturalism, heterogeneity takes a back seat to homogeneity.

THE JAPANESE-SOUTH KOREAN NATIONAL IDENTITY GAP

Attention keeps fixating on South Korean grievances against Japan centered on the history of annexation, colonialism, and cultural genocide from 1910 to 1945. There is much more to the national identity gap than these memories. Japanese and South Koreans discriminated against residents deemed from the other country. Public opinion on both sides had a low opinion of the other side. Rising economic ties from the 1960s were not matched by either cultural or political ties. Each of the dimensions of national identity sheds light on this anomalous situation for two states that are culturally closer than others in East Asia and share the United States as an ally and a series of foreign policy views. In particular, the distinctive nature of the vertical dimension identity gap was exacerbated by Japan's spike and

South Korean democratization in the 1980s. Instead of the post-Cold War leading to a rapid narrowing of the gap, it fluctuated over two decades accompanied by an intermittently narrowing tendency. This has been interpreted in various ways, but a sociological perspective on national identity places the gap in a different framework.

The vertical dimension in Japan is a major source of the national identity gap with South Korea. In the 1980s the potential was greatest for economic integration of the two states to be accompanied by dense social networks and shared values that could draw them closer. Yet, Japanese notions of homogeneity, discrimination against the Korean minority identified with South Korea as well as those seen as tied to North Korea, and other factors of vertical identity stood in the way. Indeed, even as "internationalism" drew attention as one of the most popular slogans, the weakness of international NGOs in Japan and of substantive progress toward this goal proved unfavorable for openness to South Koreans. Disparaging views of U.S. diversity and "multiculturalism" in general also had this negative effect. Aspiring to leadership in East Asia converting economic power into soft power and trust, the Japanese failed to understand that even as South Koreans surreptitiously evaded control on cultural imports to enjoy anime, television dramas, and other Japanese products, clannishness in Japan diminished any appeal that their country might achieve. With democratization in South Korea came intensified pursuit of modern values—internationalism in a truer sense, a women's movement, study abroad, etc., for which Japan seemed to be a backwater. Japan's internal image lost its remaining allure.

Democratization transformed South Korea's vertical dimension in a manner not favorable to narrowing the gap with Japan. After all, the normalization of 1965 as well as subsequent breakthroughs to improve political ties had been viewed as the dictatorship's moves against the will of the people. The rising clout of social movements and NGOs gave those suspicious of Japan a greater say in the political arena. Presidents on the right and the left pulled back from early initiatives to improve relations with Japan linked to national interests. Roh Moo-hyun's frontal assault on the South Korean political order, symbolized by efforts to expose those who had collaborated with the Japanese occupiers, made a direct link between lingering injustice and improper handling of history with new implications for views of Japan. Conservatives rejected this, but even as they emphasized common national interests, claims to have shared values with Japan fell on deaf ears.

Behind Japan's failure to close the gap was a social system steeped in *uchi-soto* and groupism rather than broad principles. Anti-communism was counterbalanced on the right by revisionism, neutralizing the affinity that could have gone to the one neighbor that might have partnered with Japan against communist threats. The quest for Asianism that many in Japan sought for half a century after it regained its independence naturally should have started with South Korea, but even normalization of diplomatic relations was delayed to 1965 and not followed even when Japan was most intent on regionalism in the 1990s. If Japan had really seen itself as part of the West, as it long claimed, or concentrated on shared values with the United States in striving to build an international community, then South Korea would have been viewed differently.

One part of the problem in Japanese-South Korean relations is the weakness of networks linking the two. As South Korea modernized rapidly, Japan's large corporations played a major role, but their inward-looking, paternalist environment was not conducive to network building. Similarly, South Korean *chaebol* were focused on state support at home not on networking abroad. University communities also have been inward-looking. South Korean universities were slow even to permit Japanese-language courses or majors centered on Japan. Japanese universities and think tanks did not prioritize Korean studies. Cultural elites have tended to favor progressive causes, compounded by Japanese scorn for a dictatorship until the late 1980s and South Korean restrictions on Japanese cultural imports until the 1998 opening in stages. The internationalization of culture and academia in the West is a sharp contrast with the realities in both of these protectionist countries.

The KORUS FTA and the TPP both challenge the vertical dimension of national identity. They are perceived as the latest manifestation of U.S.-led efforts since at least the 1980s to undermine the uniqueness of a system understood as a means to maintain a distinctive civilization. In both Japan and South Korea a linkage was made between the political national identity, economic national identity, and cultural national identity. The state's role in the economy was construed as vital to protecting the nation's culture. As the occupying power in 1945 in both Japan and South Korea, the United States brought an emphasis on democratic values, free markets, and cultural openness to the West. All of these objectives posed challenges to vested interests and established ways of thinking, and even two-thirds of a century later there continues to be a national identity backlash.

Japanese traditionally view villages and enterprises as communities (*kyodotai*, paternalism, etc.). U.S. efforts to break down barriers to outsiders, who are in pursuit of universal principles rather than hierarchical communities, appear threatening. Trade talks, financial globalization, and now the TPP are seen by many as mechanisms to undermine what makes Japan unique. In fact, vested interests on the government dole manipulate symbols of Japan's exceptionalism to protect their benefits. Yet, the state bureaucracies and the political system have been skewed to serve these interests. The result is tunnel vision, symbolic distractions, educational myopia without grounding in principles, and even paranoia toward the outside world. In-bred careerism within strong hierarchical organizations leaves many hesitant to show creativity, feeling powerless or apathetic.

One key to the wide Japanese-South Korean identity gap is the powerful hold of a narrow version of cultural national identity in each state. *Minjok* emerged in opposition to Japan, focused attention on Koreanness for which Japan's treatment of Zainichi Koreans was long the main transgression, and stood in the way of a civic identity open to shared values. Similarly, *Nihonjinron* treated the Zainichi as the main threat to purity in Japan, and it interfered with civic identity. Cultural opening from 1998 did not mean openness.

THE CHINESE-SOUTH KOREAN NATIONAL IDENTITY GAP

China and South Korea achieved the appearance of a minimal identity gap in the 1990s. China gave no hint that North Korea continued to be of identity significance. Ties to South Korea, beginning with normalization, seemed to be rooted in a rejection of any appeal to national identity, as South Korea's *nordpolitik* abandoned anti-communism and China's friendly neighborly relations abandoned communist ideology. History drew these countries together, each castigating Japan for its historical memories as they even joined in presenting their shared outlook in 1995. As late as 2003, they were both eager backers of regionalism, cooperating in the context of ASEAN+3. As Roh Moo-hyun took office distancing himself from the United States and Hu Jintao assumed China's presidency in an atmosphere of intensifying pursuit of regionalism, it appeared likely that the identity gap would further narrow. Unexpectedly, the gap widened abruptly over the next years.

A South Korean writer in a Chinese journal in 2010 drew lessons from bilateral relations since normalization, including from the current conflicts between the public in the two countries that have aroused anti-Chinese and anti-South Korean emotions. On the Chinese side, the writer notes that older persons think of North Korea (*Chaoxian*) when they are asked about South Korea (*Hanguo*), while younger persons are influenced by the "Korean wave" (*Hanryu*). Positive impressions of this cultural influx reportedly mix with images of South Koreans as patriotic and extremely devoted to traditional culture. Saying that Chinese of late have expressed old hegemonic illusions, the author argues that some responsibility is on their shoulders. Yet, the bulk of attention centers on the reasons for anti-Chinese feelings among South Koreans: a national superiority complex born through rapid economic growth; insufficient knowledge of China, assuming that its backwardness endures and warrants an arrogant attitude; and an effort to boost national pride displacing China's centrality in the history of East Asian culture and politics. Insisting that one side alone cannot resolve these cultural tensions, the author appeals to politicians, academics, and the public at large to strive to overcome them. Yet, this message, however bold in the context of Chinese censorship, falls short of explaining the national identity contexts.[35]

Much is written in China on extreme nationalism in South Korea and the resulting superiority complex. This is seen as having deep historical reasons and as increasingly threatening Sino-South Korean relations. It is especially manifest in views of history.[36] Yet, China's recent glorification of premodern Sinocentrism is the driving force there.[37]

Chinese sources do little to conceal that a major part of the problem of distrust is Lee Myung-bak's foreign policy. Strengthening U.S. relations, developing a "mature" relationship with Japan, and arousing dissatisfaction in North Korea, Lee is abandoning close cooperation with China in favor of a subordinate role with the United States. Prior to assuming the presidency, Lee openly charged that China is distorting history and supported the renaming of Seoul in characters from "*Hancheng*" to "*Shouer*," earning him a record of arousing Chinese nationalist

emotions. Having drawn these conclusions, one article advises that both sides should respect each other's concerns with a sincere attitude cognizant of the big picture and long-term strategy for relations in the region.[38]

Another Chinese source warns that South Korean thinking is not strategic. Mixing Roh Moo-hyun's overreaching in trying to make his country the "balancer," as if this was the same as striving to give it leading regional influence, and Lee's erroneous policies toward the United States and North Korea, it stresses the limits of South Korean power in a sensitive region where competition is increasingly intensifying.[39] Moreover, it warns of the delusion of a new age in Japanese-South Korean relations given the grassroots split over history and territory. This is the real national identity issue that Lee is forgetting as he ignores the importance of Sino-South Korean relations for unification of the peninsula.

Chinese sources assume a stark dichotomy between reconciliation with North Korea that allows it to exist while dropping pressure on it and Cold War, anti-communist mentality aimed at regime change. Nothing that North Korea says or does is considered in this stark choice, which Lee Myung-bak is failing. By not accepting China's strategy for resuming the Six-Party Talks, Lee is proving fidelity to "universal values" with ramifications also for his outlook on China. North Korea is a surrogate for China's vertical dimension of national identity, and refusal to succumb to its aggression means disrespect to China.[40] This is not spelled out in so many words, but it is the essence of numerous arguments.

A key to the Sino-South Korean gap is the assertiveness about culture in China since 2008. In June 2010 Li Changchun called for unifying the cultural heritage, and in October 2011 the plenary session of the Communist Party Central Committee pressed for a new plan on cultural security. This focus on cultural conflict sets the background for a narrower approach to South Korea, whose distinct culture is questioned most seriously. To the extent that the unity of ethnic groups, patriotism, and the threat of universal values are foremost in Chinese thinking about culture, gaps are prone to widen with other states.

PUBLIC OPINION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY GAPS

A joint survey of China, Japan, and South Korea in October 2011 provides timely information on mutual images with comparisons to survey results from a year earlier. The most striking finding for the Japanese-South Korean relationship is that twice as many in Korea (64%) consider relations to be bad and nearly four times as many (77%) say that they do not trust Japan. Optimism does not prevail, but neither does pessimism: 35% of Japanese and 30% of Koreans expect relations to improve, while 5% of Japanese and 14% of Koreans see them getting worse. Historical memory and the territorial dispute are foremost in Korean minds. Interest in a bilateral trade agreement is far less in Korea than in Japan. Interest in the other country's culture is far lower in Korea than in Japan. These differences suggest a narrower, more intense national identity focus on the Korean side without any appreciable narrowing of the gap that has existed with Japan.

Sino-South Korea relations are considered good by 51% of Chinese and 55% of South Koreans. Whereas 54% of Chinese indicate that they can trust the South as many as 77% of South Koreans answered that they cannot trust China. This figure is as high as the figure for not trusting Japan.[41] Given levels of distrust of China equal to those of Japanese and levels of liking the United States higher than in Japan, it may not come as a surprise that Koreans even more than Japanese think that South-Korean-Japanese defense cooperation should be strengthened.[42] This anomaly is one sign that the identity gap can be reduced further if efforts are made to downplay the main symbols of bilateral distrust.

A pair of Chinese books delves further into the mutual images of South Koreans and Chinese. Drawing on original survey research, they find strong awareness of narrow nationalist emotions on the other side. Especially in the book on Korean perceptions, they find that rival interpretations of culture are at the core of deep mistrust.[43] International relations matter, but cultural divisions with history in the forefront and symbols redolent with historical meaning often lay the groundwork for suspicions that spill over.

CONCLUSION

What drives national identity gaps? One explanation is that democratization and universal values draw some countries closer and open gaps with others. Yet, South Korea did not narrow its gap with Japan as a result of democratization in the second half of the 1980s nor did China's June 1989 brutal repression of those demanding universal values slow South Korea's pursuit of normalization. A second explanation is that modernization and economic integration narrow national identity gaps. As South Korea's "economic miracle" reached its peak in the 1980s, the gap with highly modernized Japan, which was the principal economic partner in the region, should have narrowed. Similarly, as China's "economic miracle" accelerated in the 1990s and 2000s with ever closer ties to Japan and South Korea, the gaps should have narrowed, but they did not. A related explanation is that acceptance of a shared goal for establishing regionalism, such as occurred with joint membership in ASEAN+3 and a decade later with the formation of the trilateral forum of these three countries, should have propelled identity gap narrowing. On the contrary, national identity gaps in 2012 are much wider than they were in recent decades with the exception of the Japan-South Korea gap, which keeps fluctuating with no breakthrough.

On both the left and the right there is nervousness about succumbing to U.S. aims at convergence, losing not only balance that would come with an East Asian community but also critical pillars that hold up their own national community. They have mostly lost confidence in their own political national identity, disturbed by paralysis in Japan and by one president after another losing popularity in South Korea. Youth are alienated. People are insecure. The solution is sought in rediscovering some national essence that has been lost, by finding some fusion of politics and culture that centers on state identity.

The Sino-Japanese gap is the most prominent national identity gap in East Asia. It has a prominent historical component, but it spreads across all dimensions. On vertical or cultural identity, this gap is much greater than those between Japan and South Korea and even China and South Korea. Moments of political reconciliation since the 1990s have failed to stop this gap from widening, and there is little reason to expect narrowing ahead.

With both the Sino-U.S. gap and Sino-Japanese gaps widening, South Korea faces the challenge of clarifying its own national identity and how that relates to China. Much will depend on North Korea and Sino-North Korean relations. The impact of economic integration with China, well beyond the levels for Japan and the United States, will be a factor. Yet, as China tightens control over "cultural entertainment" that popularized the "Korean wave" and reinforces the authoritarian nature of its system, South Korean public opinion is likely to continue the pattern of recent years in perceiving a wider identity gap.

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ASIA AT A TIPPING POINT: KOREA, THE RISE OF CHINA, AND THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

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