



# Globalization and South Korea–Japan Relations

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## Globalization and South Korea-Japan Relations

### Introduction

It has been 65 years since the surrender of Japan brought World War II to a close. The countries of East Asia are now experiencing a wide range of debate on the way history is perceived. The arguments were originally based on Japan's actions in the modern era, but have now expanded to include discussions on ancient relations between Korea and Japan and between Korea and China.

Then why are such historical debates emerging in this region? In searching for the answer, we must realize that the arguments of today are not about history itself but are concerned with the *perception* of history. And in discussing that subject, we must put in mind three major points.

First, we must reflect on the fact that there are differences between the *past*, *history* and the *perception of history*.

There is no need to explain that the past is about what has existed or occurred in an earlier time, which from the present, is in the opposite direction of the future in the line of flowing time.

It is also evident that the past consists of an endless number of facts that could be infinitely divided and dissected. Of course, as long as the past remains past, it is impossible to change what has existed or occurred. However, we each have different stories about the past, and should our stories change, it is not this *past* which has been modified but the present.

As properly pointed out by Max Weber, who is considered the founder of modern sociology, *history* is a unique constellation of facts assembled from the infinite materials provided by the past, which are selected intentionally or unconsciously by individuals or members of a particular group based on their values or perspectives.

In other words, *history* under this concept is hugely defined by the *choice* of individuals or groups seeking to describe history in a way that is more than just a collection of facts from the past.

History in many cases borrows the form of a story, and the basic structure of the storyline determines which facts from the past are used in the narration. For

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example, the following sentence: “It was Aug. 6, 1945, in Japan when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima,” provides a correct fact but cannot be said to represent *correct history*, which is a concept that, theoretically, never exists.

It would be difficult to communicate through different stories, the descriptions of which emphasize different facts, although the facts themselves may be correct. This means that the most important thing about history is recognizing which facts from the past people choose to focus on and tell stories about.

“Historical perception” can be explained as a standard people use to choose from an infinite constellation of facts from the past. Therefore, it can be said that history is a production of historical perception, and not the other way around.

Granted, the establishment of a particular fact from the *past* may influence the way we perceive history and lead to a modified description of history.

However, it should be noted that the process of confirming a fact from the past is largely determined by the way we view it, since the fact previously would never have gained that particular level of awareness.

Furthermore, as described earlier, historical perception is not dictated by the past, but determined by the interests of the people living in the present and the situation that surrounds such interests.

Therefore, if a certain issue that did not garner much attention in the past, is now considered to be crucial, it obviously reflects a change in the present rather than the past. Most of the issues surrounding the arguments between South Korea and Japan over the way each country has defined history serve as a good example of this.

We do not need further explanation that the arguments over the legitimacy of the Annexation Treaty between Imperial Japan and Korea or the forcefulness used in the recruitment of comfort women and wartime labor mobilization are more about the interpretation of the facts rather than the facts themselves.

Then why are we still occupied with debates over the way history is perceived, more than six decades after the end of World War II? The main article attempts to find an answer for this question by analyzing the debates between South Korea and Japan over each country’s perception of history from three different angles and taking a shot at clearly identifying the conditions of the present.

The first chapter is focused on recalling what our original discussions about the past were like following the events of 1945 and how the debates have evolved since then. Here, I discuss how the demise of the wartime generation in South Korea and Japan in the late 1980s, which coincided with the emergence of a new generation of people without first-hand knowledge of the colonial period, has complicated the arguments over historical perception between the two countries.

In the second chapter, I explore the bigger background of the conflicts over

historical perception between each Northeast Asian country.

There is the notion that the arguments between South Korea and Japan, or China and Japan, are issues limited to an *old generation* that experienced colonial times and war. Friction could therefore be resolved with greater interaction between the *new generation* of people who are disconnected from the past, or so the theory goes.

Such futuristic expectations, in which the old generation, failing to find the answers, bestows their problems to the new generation, have given people hope for an end to the controversy.

However, the appropriate question to ask would be: Are the exchanges between Northeast Asian countries flourishing in the first place?

I discuss this question in this second chapter. Contrary to existing points of view, exchanges between Northeast Asian countries are not thriving in a way that will help to resolve arguments over differences in the historical perspectives of each nation. As a matter of fact, mutual relationships between the countries seem headed in the direction of separation rather than integration.

In the third chapter, I discuss the political conditions in each country significantly influencing their perceptions of history and the surrounding social situations. As is well documented, many Northeast Asian countries are experiencing huge changes in their political systems and social structures due to the demise of the elites who previously held significance as they exerted great social influence.

Such changes have brought about the emergence of populist politics in these countries, a shift from party politics that are heavily reliant on organizational powers, as can be seen in the case of former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

At the same time, the declining authority of traditional political organizations has allowed various governments to fall into lame duck periods once the heads of state have experienced a dip in their public approval ratings, as can be seen in the cases of Koizumi, South Korea's Roh Moo-hyun and Taiwan's Chen Shui-bian.

The discussion here is that the lame duck status, or unpopular populist politics, of these administrations has forced political leaders to rely on nationalism in order to win back public approval.

I hope that this article, in identifying the aforementioned problems surrounding Northeast Asia, contributes to finding a positive direction for our future.

## 1: Forgetting and Rediscovering the Past

*“If the new generation of people disconnected from the past were to strengthen the level of mutual exchange all of the problems regarding the ‘past’ would naturally be resolved.”*

When people make such arguments, they innocently presume that the people of the new generation are disconnected to the facts of the *past* and can freely discuss the issues between one another regardless of their nationalities.

In other words, the past cannot be a *past* for the old generation, but rather a *reality* they have experienced in an earlier period, which makes it harder for them to compromise their views on the subjects under discussion. In comparison, this same *past* has no direct connection to the new generation, which allows them the freedom to have constructive discussions.

To examine such presumptions, let’s analyze the actual data available to us to review how the discussions about the past between the two countries have commenced until now and how the debates are expected to evolve in the course of a *new history*. Tables 1 and 2 show the number of articles published by Japan’s *Asahi Shimbun* and South Korea’s *Chosun Ilbo* since World War II on the subject of the past history of the two countries.

*The Asahi Shimbun* is considered to be the most liberal voice among Japan’s major newspapers, while conservative *Chosun Ilbo* has been known for some time for its anti-Japanese viewpoint.

The figures on the tables display the number of *Asahi Shimbun* articles on the subject of the country’s past, and the number of *Chosun Ilbo* articles that both contain the word “Japan” and other words related to the “past.” (Since the phrases “Pro-Japanese collaborators” and “independence movement” imply a relationship with Japan, they have been included in the count.)

For *Asahi Shimbun* articles through 1984, the figures on the tables represent the number of articles assorted by the key words and article items from the newspaper’s database, which included search words related to the past. For articles after 1985, the figures on the tables represent the actual number of articles that contained the search words.

What we can see from the statistics is different from the popular belief, that the transition from the old generation, which experienced one kind of *past*, to the new generation, which did not, would allow cool and objective discussions over the way South Korea and Japan have perceived their histories.

It is rather the other way around, as the demise of the old generation and the

emergence of the new has actually brought about an increase in the number of arguments about the past.

Such trends are evident in Japan after the 1980s and in Korea after the 1990s, which indicates that the conflict over history is far from being on course to finding a solution, and the rift between the two sides is actually deepening.

The heated debates over historical perception, brought about by the emergence of the new generation, are not just limited to international relations between South Korea and Japan.

As shown by the arguments surrounding the Tokyo War Crimes Trials (1946-1948) and South Korea's handling of pro-Japanese collaborators, the debates over historical perception are also vibrant in domestic circles.

We can find countless number of examples that this kind of discourse has brought radical arguments never seen before via the Internet and other mediums. Then what was wrong with the assumption that the new generation of South Koreans and Japanese would calmly be able to discuss issues about the past?

A popular answer would be Japan's alleged swing to the right, which also served as a popular explanation for the controversy over the country's history textbooks.

However, at least domestically, it cannot be said that the environment surrounding Japanese media outlets has changed since the 1980s. It also cannot be said that discussions over the historical textbooks are based on a clear reflection of reality.

Tables 3, 4 and 5 show the changes in the descriptions of Japan's expansionist period in middle and high school history textbooks that were published by Tokyo Shoseki Co., Osaka Shoseki Co. and Jikkyou Shuppan Co., the country's leading publishers of school textbooks.

The numbers on the tables show that the amount of content dealing with Japan's colonial rule over Korea has increased over the years and is narrated in denser detail. This represents a different reality from what has been presumed to be true about the debates over historical perception between South Korea and Japan, which attests to an exaggerated reaction by both sides to a limited set of actions.

This also tells us that the changes in the collective perception of the *present* are having just as much influence as those of the *past* in the arguments over how history is being perceived by the two countries today.

Then how did this happen? The first explanation for the current phenomenon is that it is part of the process of rediscovering history, which was effected by a typical transition between generations.

A distinctive example of this can be found in the debate over the comfort women. As you all may know, this is an issue that quickly garnered renewed focus in the

1990s and developed as a symbol of the arguments between South Korea and Japan over their differing perceptions of history.

However, it would be important to point out that the issue of comfort women never gathered significant public attention in South Korea before the 1990s. This may explain why many of the related arguments among South Koreans reveal a kind of confusion between comfort women and the *teishintai* (挺身隊, the female workers' brigade).

This proves that, at least for the new generation of South Koreans, the facts of history have become somewhat obscured and now they must rediscover each fact anew.

This is not to say that the old generation of South Koreans is unable to tell the difference between comfort women and the *teishintai*.

Many former South Korean presidents and other high-profile politicians from past generations either served in the military during the period of Japanese colonial rule or witnessed the wartime mobilization of Korean people by Japanese Governors-General.

However, the fact that politicians have refused to use these issues to further their diplomatic demands, and that the media outlets of the time nearly avoided these issues entirely, proves that South Korea's older generation was reluctant to discuss these issues despite their firsthand knowledge of them.

It is the same with the debates over pro-Japanese collaborators. As seen by the story of Shin Ik-hee when he declared to Chang Deok-soo that "anyone who remained (in Korea) is a Japanese collaborator," upon his return to Korea from Chongqing in 1945, specific comments on Japanese colonial rule can have unpredictable effects on Koreans living in the *present* of that time.

It should be considered how difficult it would have been to live without any connection to the government of the Japanese Governors-General during the colonial era.

The same could be said about the old generation of Japan. As typically seen in the arguments over the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, the majority of Japanese people did not muster serious opposition against the country's involvement in a series of wars, starting with the invasion of Manchuria, the Japan-China War, and the Pacific War, with the possible exception of a few dissidents imprisoned throughout the reign of Emperor Showa.

If they had, borrowing the logic of Shin Ik-hee, it would have been easy to make the accusation that "anyone who remained outside of prison is a war collaborator."

This is why most people of Japan's old generation, who experienced the war, were reluctant to comment much about the Tokyo War Crimes Trials and the debates over war criminals.

This is also true in the debates over Class A war criminals. Because between Class A war criminals and average civilians were those indicted for Class B and Class C war crimes, and the Japanese public had a negative reaction against punishing individuals who became war criminals by following the orders of their superiors.

Actually, the Japanese Parliament has approved resolutions demanding the release of war criminals on three separate occasions, of which, two were all-party agreements backed even by the Japanese Socialist Party and the Japanese Communist Party.

In this sense, the experience of Japan and South Korea starkly differs from that of Germany, which used Nazi Party membership as an important standard in defining war criminals, and is more similar to the case of France, which dealt out lukewarm punishments to collaborators working under the German military invaders and the Vichy regime.

In some way or another, the silence of the old generation on “problems that could come back to haunt us” increased the shock felt by the new generation upon their discovery of newly learned facts.

To be fair, the reasons behind the reluctance of the old generation to discuss the past extensively are not entirely about avoiding responsibility.

For example, for the old generation of South Koreans, who were forced to learn from Japanese school textbooks during the colonial period, the absence of regret in today’s Japanese textbooks over the country’s occupation of the Korean Peninsula would only be accepted as natural.

However, for the new generation of South Koreans, who believe that every word in their school textbooks was written from a nationalist perspective, the fact that Japanese textbooks describe the same events differently comes as a shock in and of itself.

Similarly, it would be unacceptable to the new generation of South Koreans to know that the founders of Korea University, Yonsei University and other prestigious schools – glorified by their campus statues – have all, during their careers, been accused for “collaborationist activities” at a time when every Korean should have risen and fought for their nation, according to the textbooks.

The new generation finds that the history they learn in school has many holes, so they put more effort into rediscovering history in order to patch the gaps.

A similar process also occurred in Japan. Since the 1980s, descriptions about Japan’s occupation of the Korean Peninsula were significantly increased in the country’s history textbooks.

For the new generation educated through these textbooks, it is shocking to learn



that the historians of both countries agree that the Korean Peninsula experienced growth in its gross domestic product during the colonial period.

There is no need to further mention that this shock has led the new generation to reach simple conclusion that Japan did some good things in the Korean Peninsula, which naturally went on to become the base of anti-Korean sentiment.

It's important to recognize that during the transition from the old generation to the new generation, the inability of the old generation to clear up the historical issues of a period they lived through has led the new generation to rediscover a limited range of historical facts of which they were sure their predecessors were aware.

Needless to say, such rediscoveries tend to be sensational, further widening the gap in the way both countries perceive history.

The old generation, which is assumed to have first-hand knowledge about the reality of the past, is attacked by the oversimplified historical perspectives of the new generation and then fades before our eyes without ever telling us the detailed story.

It could be said that the emergence of the new generation, with their lack of knowledge of the reality of the earlier period, has turned the past into nothing more than a simple sensation.

It seems that the conflict over the perception of history is not something that can be resolved strictly through the transition from old generation to new.

## **2: Current State of Exchange between South Korea and Japan**

Now let's examine the kinds of mutual exchange undertaken by South Korea and Japan, which serve as the premise for the claim that says, "If the new generation of people disconnected from the *past* were to strengthen the level of mutual exchange, all of the problems regarding the past would naturally be resolved."

As is well documented by the media, the movement of people, commodities, and money between the three Northeast Asian states of South Korea, China and Japan has increased significantly when compared to the past.

For example, Graph 1 shows changes in trade volume between South Korea and Japan after the two countries normalized their diplomatic relationship in 1965. The numbers clearly indicate that exchanges between South Korea and Japan are as vigorous as ever, and the countries now seem indispensable to one another.

However, we must also note that advancements in globalization have widened relations between several Northeast Asian countries, not just between South Korea and Japan. And needless to say, defining how influential a certain national entity is to another society and its individuals is not to be determined by the sheer volume

of exchanges between the two countries. It is more significant to note how relatively important one country is to another in a multilateral setting.

As Graph 2 and 3 indicate, the influence of Japan and the United States on South Korea is on a gradual and constant decline. This has less to do with the economic situation in Japan and the United States and more to do with the growth of the South Korean economy and its expanded influence under the advancement of globalization. This is a natural result of South Korea becoming free from the strategic settings of the Cold War period since the 1990s and there is nothing wrong with that.

The same is true of Japan. There is a lot of talk about vigorous exchange between South Korea and Japan, but at least in the trade of commodities and human capital, it cannot be said that South Korea's importance to Japan is increasing.

As Graph 4 indicates, the relative proportion of trade with South Korea is not on the rise, and the number of Japanese travelers to South Korea is not increasing either from 2000 to 2004, despite the Korea-Japan FIFA World Cup and the *hallyu* (Korean wave), which denotes the increasing popularity of South Korean pop culture in Japan.

This shows that the increasing exchange of human capital, commodities and money between South Korea and Japan can only be evaluated as relative to the two Northeast Asian countries' expanding relations with many other world economies.

In the end, we could make the conclusion that through the progress of globalization, the societies or individuals of each country are turning their attention to many other regions and professions. As a result of this process, the presence of a national entity that earlier had crucial importance to a society and its individuals has now become relative to the rest of the world.

South Korea and Japan had long been immensely important partners to one another – economically, socially and as well in security. However, the current situation is completely different. Globalization has given both countries more options and this has inevitably decreased the value of one to the other.

Some might refute the idea that relations with China cannot be explained by the same logic. However, let's keep in mind two important facts.

The first is that contrary to the increasing presence of China to both South Korea and Japan, the economic importance of the two countries to China is declining or has become stagnant.

The progress of globalization and the adoption of a policy of engagement with China by the United States and other major states has resulted in the decreased value of South Korea and Japan to the Middle Kingdom.

The increasing proportion of exchange between South Korea, Japan and China has more to do with China's rapid rise as a global trading power, rather than it being a neighboring Northeast Asian state.

In the current situation in Northeast Asia, the widely accepted presumption that "increasing mutual exchange will bring progress in mutual understanding" coexists with another kind of logic, which states that "with mutual importance becoming relative, mutual respect is being lost."

In fact, as indicated in Tables 6, 7 and 8, a *Yomiuri Shimbun* report from this year indicates that Japanese people now consider India to be a more important state than South Korea. The same survey revealed that the importance of Japan in the minds of the Chinese people has shrunk by more than half in the past decade and it is now in the same league as Russia.

In this sense, it could be said that Northeast Asia is more in a process of dissemination than integration. This, as discussed in the earlier chapter, is connected to the oblivion of the past and a rediscovery of history and may contribute to providing a tone for mutual contempt.

All things considered, it could be said that the current reality in Northeast Asia puts the countries in a difficult position from which they are able to push for regional integration, contrary to popular belief.

This becomes more evident when compared with the experience of the European Union. As the birth of the EU can be traced to the European Economic Community, it is clear that political and economic integration in Europe originated from economic partnerships.

In pushing forward to advance regional integration, European countries have been allowed to focus on economic issues since the early 1950s. This is because of their economic prosperity after World War II and the fact that they presumed their biggest threat to security came from the outside – namely the Soviet Union under the Cold War confrontation.

The same could be said about the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which was formed in the background of the Vietnam War. At the time when globalization was yet a transcendent phenomenon, a neighboring country was always a crucial presence to a state, economically or politically, which is the reason why Asian countries have been able to build a relatively solid cooperative relationship.

However, the situation in Northeast Asia today differs greatly from the experience of Europe and Southeast Asia. China, with its growing economy, is becoming more of an importance presence to both South Korea and Japan. However, it is obvious that South Korea and Japan have become less important to each other than in the past. The presence of South Korea and Japan to China has

also diminished to an unprecedented level. Under the current circumstances, it is hard to imagine vibrant economic cooperation between the three Northeast Asian countries.

The security situation in Northeast Asia is also different from that of Europe or Southeast Asia during the Cold War period. It is obvious that the governments and public opinions of China and Japan consider one another as their biggest potential threats, whether strategically or emotionally.

In addition, in 2005, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun suggested to U.S. President George Bush that Japan should be considered as a potential enemy to the South Korea-U.S. alliance. A recent survey conducted this year also revealed South Korea's cautious public opinion toward both China and Japan.

It is obvious that forming cooperative regional ties is difficult when the countries consider one another to be potential threats, which is evidenced by relations between eastern European countries and Russia under the European Union.

Thus, stagnant efforts for regional integration in Northeast Asia have just as much to do with structural factors as they do with the issues of the past. And the debates about the past can only be greatly influenced by these structural factors.

### **3: The Crumbling Trust of the Political or Ruling Elites**

When discussing cooperative relations in Northeast Asia, the lack of political leadership – especially in the Westernized democracies of South Korea, Japan and perhaps Taiwan – which is considered to be a requirement for regional integration, has become evident.

This originates from the widening sense of distrust of the political leadership in the countries and the social elite supporting them.

For example, Tables 9 and 10 compare the South Korea and Japan's public confidence in central governments and political parties to that of more than 30 other countries, excluding European states, based on data from the World Value Survey.

As the data clearly shows, the confidence of South Koreans and the Japanese in their governments and political parties was strikingly lower in comparison with other countries, even in 2001.

Granted, it should be considered that public expectations for government and political parties differ by the level of democratic development, and such statistics can only be considered as a reference point.

However, as clearly indicated in Graph 5 and 6, South Korea and Japan's public confidence in their governments, political parties, and parliaments is distinguishably lower than that of other social institutions – such as corporate

companies, civic groups, police and the military – which suggests that the statistics tell more than just numbers.

Then why have the people of Japan and South Korea lost trust in their political elites? To answer this question, it must be noted that the elites who went through certain paths of social ascendance in the two countries have enjoyed high levels of authority and took credit for their countries' rapid economic development, which was explained as "appropriate political leadership from the top."

Thus, those who graduated from Tokyo University or Seoul National University and became bureaucrats quickly ascended through the ranks of the political elite and gained a high level of social respect from their respective societies. However, slowing economic growth and the financial crisis of the 1990s resulted in the weakening of the each country's economic structure and also damaged the public's confidence in the political elite.

The decline in confidence had a breadth of effects that encompassed top universities, bureaucratic systems, and politicians, and exposed them to international competition.

It used to be good enough for Tokyo University and Seoul National University to just secure the highest spot in the hierarchy in their respective countries. However, people now view the graduates of these schools in a completely different light than they did in the past.

People are now more interested in how Tokyo University or Seoul National University compares to the world's top schools, and are seriously debating the individual abilities of the schools' graduates.

The decline of the traditional elites has resulted in the emergence of reform-minded populist politicians who rely more on their popularity than on the organizational power of their political parties, as seen in the arrivals of Taiwan's Chen Shui-bian in 2000, Japan's Junichiro Koizumi in 2001 and South Korea's Roh Moo-hyun in 2002.

With the popularity of the political parties in each country declining, the parties were forced to nominate candidates who had higher public approval ratings than the parties themselves. Of course, it is hard to fault such decisions, which appeared to be the logical option at the time.

The real problem is that the political situations of these countries today seem stagnant since the debut of the populist leaders.

The populist leaders, who marked their emergence with criticisms of the old elite, managed to gather enthusiastic support from the public early in their terms with fresh and aggressive words and behavior.

However, these new leaders shared the common problem that, although it was

obvious that their traditional political systems were flawed, none of them had a grand scheme for actually changing and reforming the current structures.

For this reason, as seen by Koizumi having adopted the curious logic of masking postal reform as a serious agenda item, backed by public demand in 2005, the reform policies of the populist leaders were nothing more than a collection of patch work.

It did not take long for voters to notice this and the public approval ratings of the leaders have been dipping ever since.

Of course there is a clear reason behind all this. In today's globalized world, the economic policies of each country are destined to be similar, as there are no options beyond a free market economy upon which to base outward strategies.

It has become impossible to achieve the high growth rates of the past when income levels have reached beyond a certain level and there is no magic way to overcome this. It is hard to find a new model for a political system when the process of democratization has been completed, and neo-liberalist policies are fueling nationalism in each country, which results in a widening gap between central cities and suburbs, and between rich and poor. To ease these disparities by using public finances or adopting policies based on low-interest rates will result in bigger budget deficits.

Figuratively speaking, the political situations of South Korea and Japan at the age of populist leaders looked like a similar theatrical play with two acts.

In the opening act, a "standard-bearer of reform" emerges on the stage and grabs political power with fresh verbal attacks on the old elite. However, the standard-bearer is found to have no grand design for the changes he promised and his reform efforts start to go down the drain.

Meanwhile, the "resisting powers" await the demise of the standard-bearer, who is pushed to the brink of losing his power. However, the standard-bearer overcomes the crisis with the help of the people, giving a heroic ending to Act 1.

Act 2 opened with the standard-bearer twisting and turning in anguish. He still did not have a grand design for achieving the reform he had promised and people were disappointed.

The difference between South Korea and Japan was that Koizumi left the stage after Act 1, while Roh remained as the main character in Act 2. In Japan, the young Prime Minister Shinzo Abe starred in Act 2, which ended with him in the role of the standard-bearer, experiencing ultimate failure and ultimately choosing his own death.

In South Korea, the standard-bearer had to fight with the resisting powers. However, the main character had seen many of his former allies become his

enemies and seems destined for a hopeless battle.

It is important to note that we had experienced a transition from the days of “populism with popularity,” which peaked around 2003, when reform-minded political leaders still had strong approval ratings, to a period of “populism without popularity.”

Now, no political leader is able to command a strong level of public confidence, despite holding on to their reformist image.

It could be said that South Korea and Japan are experiencing a cycle in which a new leader is introduced, fails to live up to expectations and ends up a lame duck.

This is because, in the post-Cold War era, there could be no such thing as a clear grand design with which to reform present political systems and structures, something like what Marxism was in the past.

Logically, South Korea is expected to suffer a greater negative impact than Japan from the cycle of lame duck leaders. This is because the South Korean president has a fixed five-year term, unless there is a Constitutional revision, unlike Japan, whose political system is based on a parliamentary cabinet system. Also, since the South Korean president is banned from reelection, it is hard for voters to develop expectations or patience for a president’s long-term policies.

It is also important to note that the expectations for reform and development are much greater in South Korea than in Japan. Naturally, big hopes turn into big disappointments when expectations are not met. A president given lame duck status early in his tenure is forced to endure that state for a long period. This can only create negative effects in state affairs and within the society as a whole.

## **Conclusion**

We have discussed the debates over the past that currently exist in Northeast Asian countries, mostly through the debates between South Korea and Japan. This article makes three points.

First, the presumption that the debates over the past would turn quiet with the transition of the old generation to the new generation proved to be wrong.

What we are experiencing today is rather an overheated argument over the perception of history, with the new generation opting to change the outdated historical perspective of the old generation, who preferred to have some things left unsaid after World War II.

We should not forget that the discussions of the new generation are often one-dimensional compared to those of the old generation, who lived through what now is the past. The new generation also tends to have a strong obsession for individualized perspectives rather than seeking a comprehensive understanding of

the social realities of the past.

This as a result seems to strengthen public assumptions in South Korea and Japan that each of them is distorting history. We should be just as careful about the collective perception held by South Koreans and Japanese of the historical perspectives of the other, as we are with the collective perception of both countries about the past.

It is important to admit that we, too, have lost sight of our *past*, and instead are exaggerating the historical perceptions of the other, while justifying ourselves through analogies that are hardly backed by sufficient evidence.

Secondly, Northeast Asian countries are experiencing a lot of difficulties in strengthening their exchanges. Contrary to popular belief, the mutual importance of Northeast Asian countries from one to another is declining under the progress of globalization, with the exception being the growing importance of China's rapidly expanding economy to South Korea and Japan.

Northeast Asian countries are now also considering one another as potential threats when drawing up security strategies. And the arguments over the past have resulted in a careless provocation of nationalism in each country.

Although arguments over history textbooks also exist between South Korea and China, the lack of extensive studies on Japan's school textbooks and textbook systems seems like a revelation of the country's declining importance to its neighboring states.

Thirdly, the current situation, which coincides with the age of "populism without popularity" or "absence of the ruling elite," is tempting the political leaders of each country to rely on nationalist rhetoric to boost their public approval ratings.

Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on Aug. 15, 2006, is interpreted as more of a political strategy than a representation of his beliefs. Koizumi, once noted for his liberal stance on diplomatic issues, had promised visits to Yasukuni during his 2001 campaign for the post of chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party, while attempting to fend off the challenge by rival Ryutaro Hashimoto, who had strong backing from Japan's war veterans.

Koizumi's Yasukuni visits could also be seen as a result of political narcissism as the former prime minister stubbornly insisted on keeping his campaign promises until the end of his tenure.

And as seen by South Korean politicians curiously commenting on potential military threats by Japan during the launching ceremony for the country's Aegis-equipped destroyer, or giving the country's new amphibious landing ship the nationalistic name of *Dokdo*, the political leaders of South Korea and Japan are now handling the issues between their two countries crudely.



The mutual importance of one to another is declining in both societies, the past is becoming a fading memory, people are accusing one another with their rediscoveries of the history of a past they never experienced and political leaders are handling elegant issues between the two countries crudely.

Considering these circumstances, it is hard to have a positive outlook on relations between the two countries.

However, we must not forget two points. One is that relations between the Northeast Asian countries are becoming relative within the progress of globalization. This will become more evident when China's economic growth rate slows.

However, relations between the Northeast Asian countries are more critical to each state when compared to those of European countries. We need to seriously focus on what to do from now for the future, rather than continuing this trend of mutual contempt.

The second point to consider is, despite all the talk about uncertainty in Northeast Asia, the region has avoided a war since the end of the Korean War in 1953. Since then, the region has enjoyed rapid economic growth rarely seen in other parts of the world.

The word "futuristic" is often emphasized, but the road toward the future can only be a line drawn from the past. It is important to discuss the unfortunate events of the past, but we also need to talk about another kind of *past* so that we can build a foundation for a friendly future relationship.

**Table 1. Number of Articles on Asahi Shimbun (Japan)**

	'KanKoku'	'Chosen'	Tokyo Trial	Yasukuni	War Criminal	War Crime	Responsibility of War
1945-49	299	1123	1005	65	418	1265	1122
1950-54	2998	8444	5	37	737	227	800
1955-59	2203	1909	0	42	329	1	361
1960-64	4944	1011	2	25	57	0	16
1965-69	3687	1925	3	81		19	1
1970-74	4791	2351	0	156	33	10	23
1975-79	5588	1917	6	94	79	3	10
1980-84	4669	1692	16	241	66	0	17
~~~~	~~~~	~~~~	~~~~	~~~~	~~~~	~~~~	~~~~
1985-89	14799	7376	124	1481	548	137	824
1990-94	23039	17441	136	597	513	236	1347
1995-99	30224	18804	202	754	778	572	949
2000-04	39450	28179	174	3282	1192	463	592
2005-09	32597	20858	358	4522	1265	315	576

<https://database.asahi.com> (accessed 16 February 2010).

For Asahi Shimbun Articles through 1984, the figures on the table show the number of articles assorted by key words and article items from the newspaper's database which included the search words. For articles after 1985, the figures represent the actual numbers of articles which contains the search words. Please note that the newspaper has local editions, and each local edition has local pages. The figures also include the articles of the local editions.

**Table 2. Number of Articles on Chosun Ilbo (South Korea)**

	Japan	Historical Perception	Historical Problem	Compensation	Pro-Japanese Collaborators	Dokdo/Takeshima	Forced Labor	Comfort Women
1945-49	1236	0	0	47	31	0	0	0
1950-54	936	0	0	13	2	22	0	0
1955-59	3250	0	0	24	3	9	0	0
1960-64	4534	0	0	22	2	31	2	0
1965-69	3535	0	0	7	3	26	3	0
1970-74	5620	0	0	8	0	6	2	0
1975-79	4643	0	0	5	1	44	0	0
1980-84	5133	1	0	4	0	13	2	0
1985-89	4748	0	0	4	2	12	11	0
1990-94	17539	45	39	344	79	56	150	3
1995-99	28121	113	47	357	119	550	186	459
2000-04	34943	135	56	286	174	386	44	349
2005-09	35867	101	141	215	217	1341	27	366

<http://www.chosun.co.kr> (accessed 16 February 2010).

The number of Chosun Ilbo articles that contain both the word "Japan" and other words related the "past" issues. Please note that the newspaper has local editions, and each local edition has local pages. The figures also include the articles of the local editions.

**Table 3. Descriptions of Japanese Textbook - Tokyo Shoseki (Histroy of Japan, Senior High)**

	1978	1983	1990	1993	1996	2000	2004
Protocol Signed Between Japan and Korea of 1904							
First Japan-Korean Convention	A	B	B	B	B	A	A
Second Japan-Korean Convention		B	A	A	A	B	A
Third Japan-Korean Convention			B		B		
Hague Secret Emissary Affair		B	B	B	B	B	A
Residents-General	B	A	A	A	A	A	A
An Jung-Geun							A
Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Governor-General of Korea		A	A	A	A	A	A
Land Investigation and Reformation		B	B	B	B	B	A
March 1st Movement	B	B	A	A	B	A	A
Kōminka Movement			B	B	B	B	A
Sōshi-Kaimei			B	B	B	B	A
Righteous Armies Protests			B	B	B	A	A
Great Kantō Earthquake						A	
Comfort Women						B	A
Forced Labor							A

Jeong Nami and Kan Kimura, “ ‘Rekishī Ninshiki’ Mondai to Daiichiji Nikkanrekishi Kyodokenkyū wo Meguru Ichi Kosatsu (1)”, *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, 16 1/2, 2008, p.72.

“A” means that the incident is accentuated by gothic fonts as an important historical incident on the textbook. “B” means that the incident is written by the normal fonts and not accentuated as important one.

**Table 4. Jikkyo Shuppan (Senior High)**

	1984	1987	1990	1994	2000	2004
Protocol Signed Between Japan and Korea of 1904				A	A	A
First Japan-Korean Convention	A	A	A	A	A	A
Second Japan-Korean Convention	A	A	A		A	A
Third Japan-Korean Convention	A		A		A	A
Hague Secret Emissary Affair	A	A	B	B	B	A
Residents-General	A	A	A	A	A	A
An Jung-Geun	B	B	B		B	A
Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty	A	A	A	A	A	A
Governor-General of Korea	A	A	A	A	A	A
Land Investigation and Reformation		A	A		A	B
March 1st Movement				A	A	A
Kōminka Movement		B	B	A	A	A
Sōshi-Kaimei		B	B	B	A	A
Righteous Armies Protests		B	A	A	A	A
Kantō Great Earthquake						A
Comfort Women				B	B	B
Forced Labor		B	A	A	B	B

Jeong Nami and Kan Kimura, “‘Rekishi Ninshiki’ Mondai to Daiichiji Nikkanrekisi Kyodokenkyu wo Meguru Ichi Kosatsu (1)”, *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, 16 1/2, 2008, p.73.

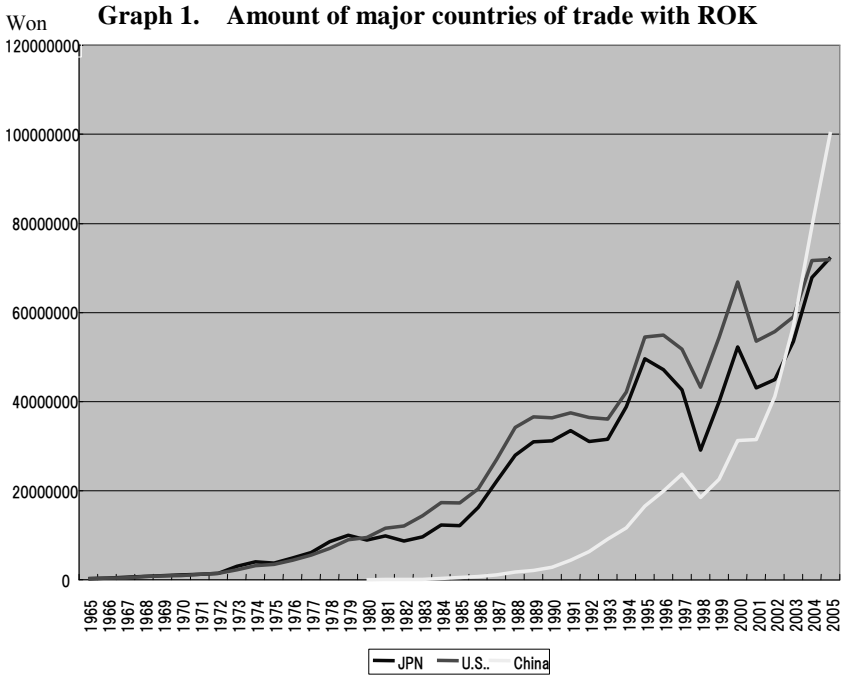
“A” means that the incident is accentuated by gothic fonts as an important historical incident on the textbook. “B” means that the incident is written by the normal fonts and not accentuated as important one.

**Table 5. Osaka Shoseki (Junior High)**

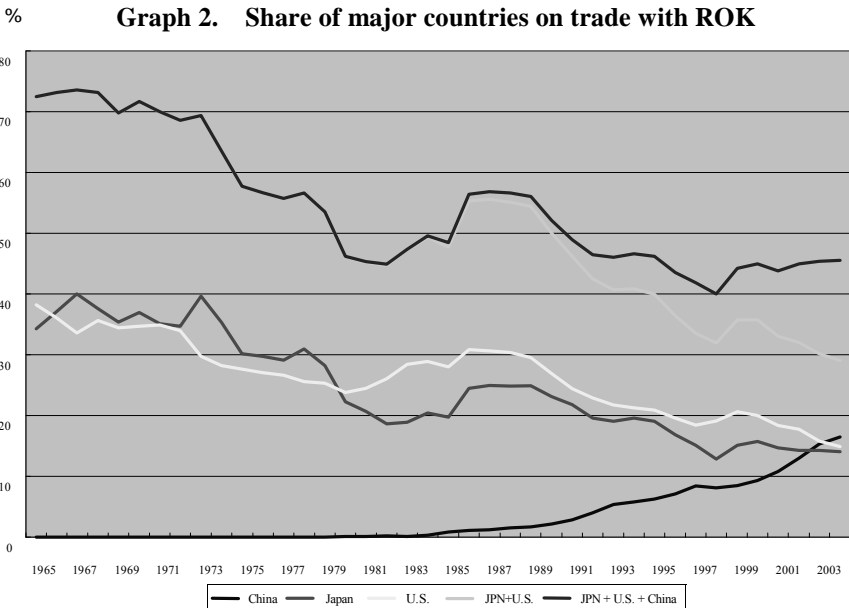
	1977	1980	1983	1986	1989	1993	1997	2006
Japan-Korea Annexation	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Residents-Genera		B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Governor-General of Korea						A		B
Righteous Armies Protests	B	A					A	B
Subjectization of Korean People		B	B			B	B	
Land Investigation and Reformation	B	B	B			B	B	B
March 1st Movement	A		A	A	A	A		A
Kantō Great Earthquake		A		A	A	A		A
Forced Labor							B	
Sōshi-Kaimei					B	B	B	B

Jeong Nami and Kan Kimura, “‘Rekishi Ninshiki’ Mondai to Daiichiji Nikkanrekisi Kyodokenkyu wo Meguru Ichi Kosatsu (1)”, *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, 16 1/2, 2008, p.74.

“A” means that the incident is accentuated by gothic fonts as an important historical incident on the textbook. “B” means that the incident is written by the normal fonts and not accentuated as important one.

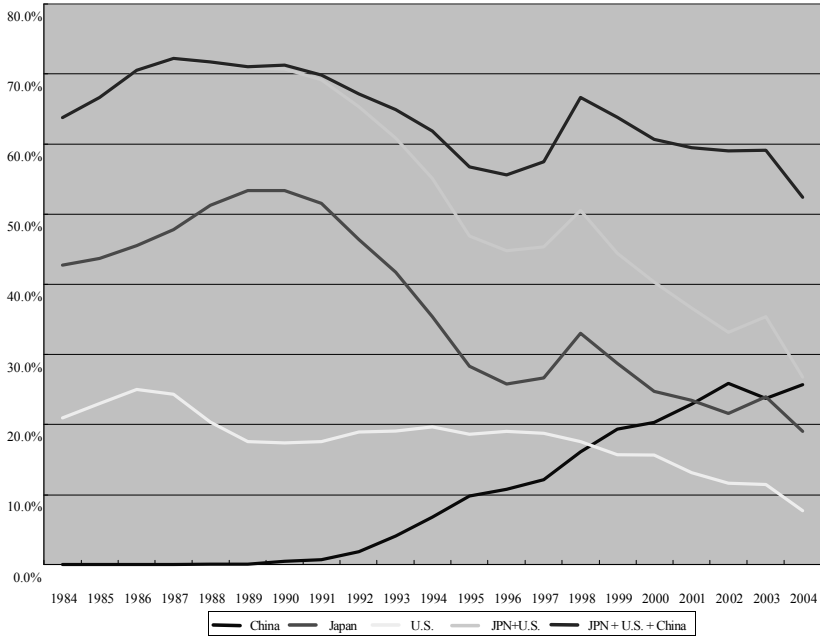


Korea National Statistical Office, <http://www.nso.go.kr/>, last visited April 26, 2008.



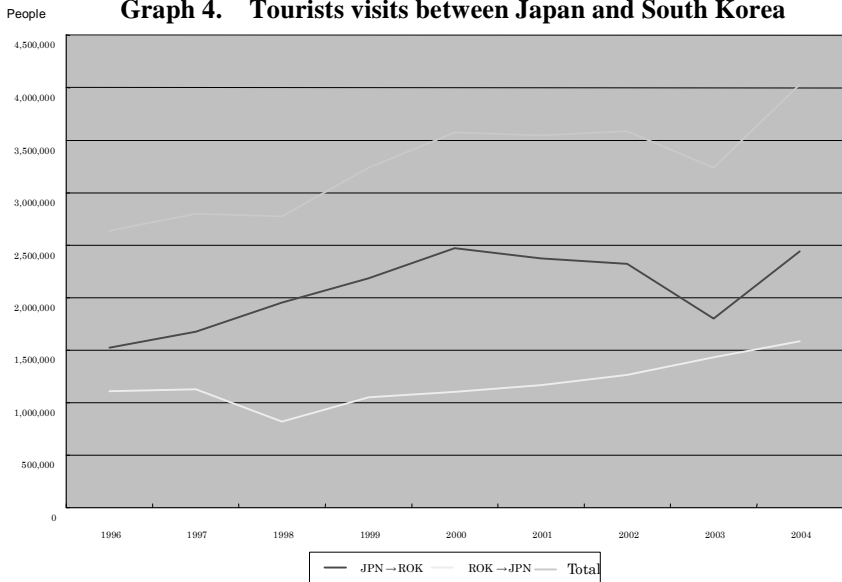
Korea National Statistical Office, <http://www.nso.go.kr/>, last visited January 18, 2008.

**Graph 3. Share of major countries of South Korean visited**



Korea National Statistical Office, <http://www.nso.go.kr/>, last visited January 18, 2008.

**Graph 4. Tourists visits between Japan and South Korea**



Korea National Statistical Office, <http://www.nso.go.kr/>, last visited January 18, 2008.

**Table 6. Which countries or areas do you think are important for economic development of your country?**

(In Japan and South Korea, up to three. In China no limitation.)

Year	Japan			South Korea			China	
	96	06	07	96	06	07	96	07
1. Japan	Own Country			75.9	81.9	78.3	71.9	38.1
2. China	49.4	63.0	62.6	60.2	90.9	87.7	Own Country	
3. Korea	21.8	20.2	17.4	Own Country			13.1	26.4
4. Thailand	1.3	3.4	2.4	2.2	2.0	2.0	2.0	3.5
5. Malaysia	1.4	1.6	0.7	0.9	0.2	0.5	2.1	4.6
6. Indonesia	2.0	3.6	2.2	1.2	0.7	1.2	0.4	3.6
7. Philippines	0.9	2.0	1.0	2.0	0.5	1.3	0.9	1.9
8. Singapore	1.7	3.7	2.4	4.2	0.4	1.7	12.6	10.8
9. Vietnam	2.3	2.9	3.5	1.3	1.2	3.3	1.1	2.7
10. ASEAN	19.3	13.7	11.8	7.4	4.4	3.1	2.3	17.7
11. India	1.0	10.8	20.1	2.0	2.9	4.5	0.5	6.6
12. Russia	3.8	2.6	4.9	3.5	2.3	3.3	8.8	34.8
13. Australia	5.5	6.1	6.8	2.6	1.4	2.0	5.0	9.9
14. United States	65.6	68.4	67.4	80.1	90.7	91.4	77.1	78.9
15. United Kingdom	4.0	5.0	3.1	3.9	1.1	1.0	11.2	13.0
16. France	2.9	3.2	1.7	1.8	0.2	0.6	5.3	13.6
17. Germany	2.6	2.5	2.1	5.0	0.6	0.4	14.0	16.3
18. EU	13.7	8.9	11.6	13.7	7.7	9.9	15.0	62.8
19. Middle East	5.3	7.2	9.4	6.9	2.9	2.7	2.2	11.4
20. Hong Kong	2.5	1.9	1.1	2.5	0.5	0.3	30.8	33.6
21. Taiwan	3.2	3.1	2.2	6.4	0.2	0.2	11.9	19.3
22. Others	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.2	1.2	0.7	0.3	1.7
23. Nothing	7.3	3.5	3.4	1.9	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.0
23. No Answer	6.9	4.1	3.7	0.1	0.5	0.0	1.4	0.0

Data: Asked in August and September 2007, by Yomiuri News Paper (Japan), Hankook-Ilbo (South Korea) and Chinese Liaowang Dongfeng Zhoukan (China).

**Table 7. Which countries or areas do you think will be influential to your country in future? (All up to three)**

	Japan	South Korea	China
	07	07	07
1. Japan	18.4	55.7	12.0
2. China	65.4	91.8	80.1
3. Korea	5.1	7.6	6.7
4. ASEAN	13.9	6.6	7.8
5. India	20.1	12.2	6.6
6. Russia	13.5	9.1	36.5
7. United State	58.0	81.0	77.6
8. United Kingdom	2.6	3.3	7.8
9. EU	21.9	21.1	56.6
10. Middle East	11.4	6.2	4.5
11. Others	0.2	0.2	0.4
12. Nothing	2.9	0.1	0.6
13. No Answer	3.4	0.2	0.4

Data: Asked in August and September 2007, by Yomiuri News Paper (Japan), Hankook-Ilbo (South Korea) and Chinese Liaowang Dongfeng Zhoukan (China).



**Table 8. Which countries or areas do you think can be a possible threat to your security? (No limits)**

Year	Japan				South Korea				China
	02	05	06	07	02	05	06	07	07
1. Japan	Own Country				43.8	57.2	55.2	37.5	78.2
2. South Korea	6.0	6.2	10.9	5.8	Own Country				12.3
3. United States	18.8	14.9	17.6	19.7	36.9	31.4	32.0	29.5	75.2
4. China	23.5	40.3	44.0	46.1	23.6	22.6	36.0	46.6	Own Country
5. ASEAN	2.1	0.7	0.5	0.9	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.9	4.9
6. EU	1.3	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.2	3.3	8.1
7. Russia	15.9	9.9	12.7	24.3	12.5	6.5	6.0	10.3	28.7
8. Taiwan	1.3	0.7	0.5	0.8	1.5	0.3	0.4	0.6	36.6
9. North Korea	62.4	81.9	77.7	73.6	71.5	64.3	59.1	71.0	9.7
10. India	No Choice		2.9	4.0	No Choice		0.2	1.4	35.1
11. Middle East	16.4	8.2	7.8	11.8	2.2	2.6	2.8	11.4	7.1
12. Oceania	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.2	---	0.1	0.1	0.0	1.2
13. Africa	No Choice		0.3	0.2	No Choice		0.2	0.6	1.7
14. Latin America	No Choice		0.8	0.4	No Choice		0.1	1.3	1.3
15. Others	0.2	---	0.2	0.1	---	---	---	---	1.3
16. Nothing	14.1	6.5	4.3	6.3	5.5	2.9	1.3	2.2	1.6
17. No Anther	4.8	2.0	3.3	3.0	1.2	0.2	0.3	0.5	1.1

Data: Asked in August and September 2007, by Yomiuri News Paper (Japan), Hankook-Ilbo (South Korea) and Chinese Liaowang Dongfeng Zhoukan (China).

**Table 9. Confidence in Government**

1	Vietnam [2001]	97.9
2	China [2001]	96.7
3	Bangladesh [2002]	87.3
4	Jordan [2001]	84.3
5	Tanzania. United Republic Of [2001]	82.9
6	Uganda [2001]	77.8
7	Iran (Islamic Republic of) [2000]	68.5
8	South Africa [2001]	60.8
9	Egypt [2000]	60.8
10	Morocco [2001]	60.7
11	Albania [2002]	58.0
12	Chile [2000]	57.6
13	India [2001]	56.2
14	Venezuela [2000]	56.0
15	Morocco [2001]	55.7
16	Algeria [2002]	54.0
17	Indonesia [2001]	52.4
18	Philippines [2001]	51.0
19	Nigeria [2000]	48.1
20	Turkey [2001]	46.4
21	Puerto Rico [2001]	44.5
22	Spain [2000]	44.2
23	Canada [2000]	42.3
24	Iraq [2004]	39.7
25	Pakistan [2001]	39.0
26	United States [1999]	37.8
27	Republic of Moldova [2002]	37.5
28	Mexico [2000]	37.1
29	Kyrgyzstan [2003]	35.1
30	Montenegro [2001]	34.0
31	Serbia [2001]	31.3
32	Republic of Korea [2001]	30.3
33	Bosnia and Herzegovina [2001]	29.5
34	Japan [2000]	27.1
35	Peru [2001]	19.5
36	Argentina [1999]	19.4
37	Macedonia. Republic of [2001]	10.9
		%

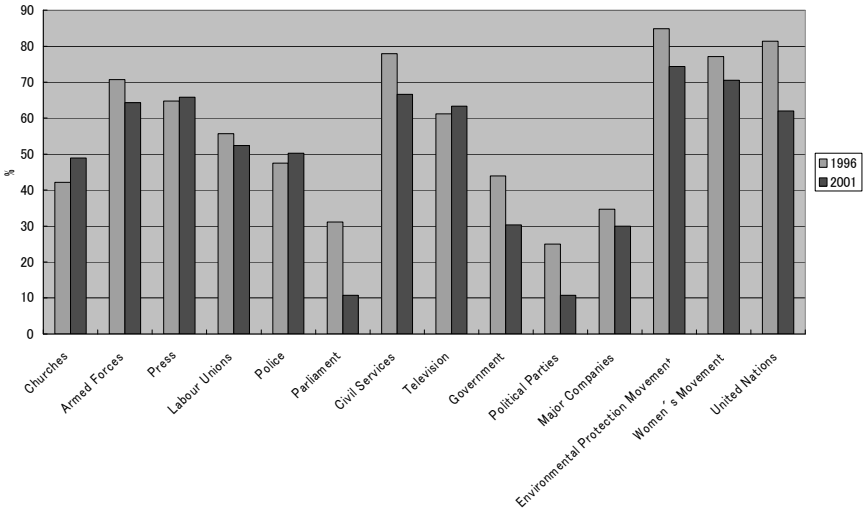
World Values Survey, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>, last visited January 19th, 2008.

**Table 10. Confidence in Political Parties**

1	China [2001]	92.8
2	Vietnam [2001]	91.6
3	Bangladesh [2002]	79.0
4	Tanzania, United Republic of [2001]	59.3
5	Egypt [2000]	50.7
6	Philippines [2001]	45.8
7	Nigeria [2000]	44.2
8	South Africa [2001]	44.2
9	Uganda [2001]	40.9
10	Iran, Islamic Republic of [2000]	34.4
11	India [2001]	33.5
12	Indonesia [2001]	33.1
13	Albania [2002]	29.4
14	Turkey [2001]	29.1
15	Jordan [2001]	28.4
16	Pakistan [2001]	27.9
17	Chile [2000]	27.7
18	Spain [2000]	27.3
19	Montenegro [2001]	25.9
20	Kyrgyzstan [2003]	25.7
21	Mexico [2000]	24.6
22	Republic of Moldova [2002]	24.0
23	Canada [2000]	23.1
24	United States [1999]	22.6
25	Venezuela [2000]	20.1
26	Puerto Rico [2001]	19.8
27	Morocco [2001]	19.6
28	Algeria [2002]	19.0
29	Japan [2000]	18.2
30	Morocco [2001]	18.0
31	Serbia [2001]	14.6
32	Bosnia and Herzegovina [2001]	14.5
33	Republic of Korea [2001]	10.8
34	Macedonia, Republic of [2001]	9.5
35	Peru [2001]	7.9
36	Argentina [1999]	7.3
		%

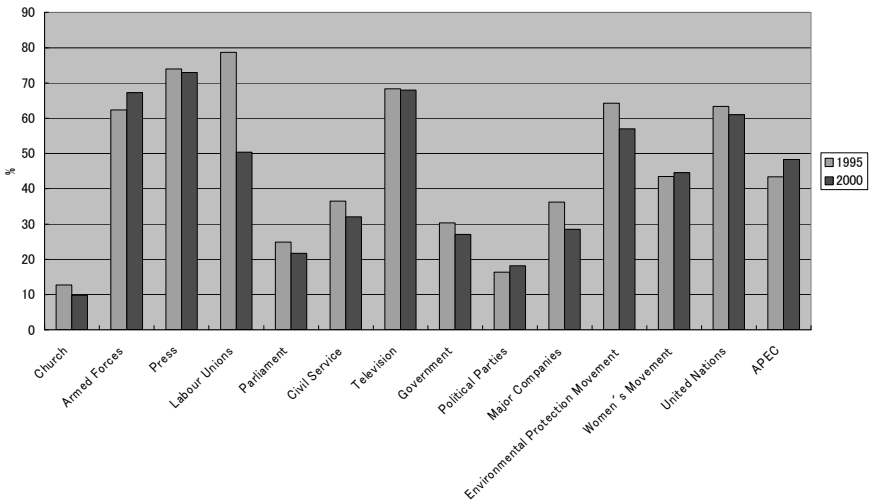
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**Graph 5. Confidence in Institution and Organization (S. Korea)**



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**Graph 6. Confidence in Institutions and Organizations (Japan)**



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