



FIJI EMBASSY TOKYO

Briefing Note 08/2019



Japan Korea Relations

Background

Japan and Korea have many issues with each other over the years. Korea was ruled by the Imperial Japanese government starting with the Japan–Korea Treaty of 1910 until the Japanese Instrument of Surrender in 1945 which ended World War II. South Korea refused to trade or open diplomatic relations with Japan until 1965, after which trade links expanded dramatically. Today, Japan and South Korea are major trading partners, and many students, tourists, entertainers, and businesspeople travel between the two countries, whereas North Korea's political and economic relations with Japan are non-existent.

What are the issues?

There are a few issues needing attention as described in the brief.

1. Historical Issues

South Korea

Although diplomatic relations were established by treaty in 1965, South Korea continues to request an apology and compensation for Korea under Japanese rule. Most Japanese Prime Ministers have issued apologies, including Prime Minister Obuchi in the Japan–South Korea Joint Declaration of 1998. While South Koreans welcomed and accepted the apologies at the time, many South Koreans are taught that the statements as insincere, because of misunderstandings between the two nations.

Statements by Japanese politicians on colonial rule

Since the 1950s, many prominent politicians and officials in Japan have made statements on Japanese colonial rule in Korea which created outrage and led to diplomatic scandals in

Korean Japanese relations. In 1997, Shinzō Abe, then a member of the House of Representatives and now Prime Minister of Japan, stated: "Many so-called victims of comfort women system are liars ... prostitution was ordinary behavior in Korea because the country had many brothels."¹

Japanese compensation to Korea for the reign of Japan

Twenty years after World War II, South Korea and Japan re-established diplomatic relations with the 1965 signing of the Treaty on Basic Relations. In 2005, South Korea disclosed diplomatic documents that detailed the proceedings of the treaty which was kept secret in South Korea for 40 years. The documents revealed that Japan provided 500 million dollars in soft loans and 300 million in grants to South Korea as compensation for the reign of Japan. South Korea agreed to demand no more compensation after the treaty, either at a government-to-government level or an individual-to-government level.

However, the South Korean government used most of the loans for economic development and have failed to provide adequate compensation to victims, paying only 300,000 won per death, with only a total of 2,570 million won to the relatives of 8,552 victims who died in forced labor.

Return of Korean remains

During the Japanese occupation of Korea during World War II, Japan mobilized 700,000 laborers from Korea to sustain industrial production, mainly in mining. Some of them eventually returned to Korea after the war, with some dying in Japan during the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, or the other Allied bombings of Japan. The high death toll may also have had

other causes in the harsh conditions of the war. Corporations, such as Mitsubishi, Mitsui and others, stated that the culpability should fall on the government and not on private companies. The government distributed funds to companies for the purposes of worker repatriation. Japanese companies paid out sums at the end of the war to Chinese work leaders intended for Chinese laborers to return home to China, but the money went missing after distribution to the Chinese workers. Later, the People's Republic of China and South Korea requested help in finding the dead bodies of kidnapped Chinese and Korean laborers for proper burial. The situation prevented China and South Korea from appropriately coordinating their efforts, and they have only identified a few hundred bodies. In addition, Korean workers began demanding their unpaid wages immediately after Japan's surrender and continue to do so today. The issue remains salient in South Korea.

Return of Korean cultural artifacts

The Japanese rule of Korea also resulted in the relocation of tens of thousands of cultural artifacts to Japan. In 1965, as part of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, Japan returned roughly 1,400 artifacts to Korea, and considered the diplomatic matter to have been resolved. Korean artifacts are retained in the Tokyo National Museum and in the hands of many private collectors.

In 1994, hundreds of books of the Heart Sutra which were donated by the Goryeo Dynasty to Japan in 1486 were stolen from a temple. The following year, three damaged books out of these hundreds were discovered in South Korea and registered as National Treasure no. 284. In 2002, thieves stole another medieval gift and a Japanese biography of Prince Shōtoku, and donated them to a temple in Korea. According to the South Korean government, there are 75,311 cultural artifacts that were taken from Korea. Japan has 34,369, the United States has 17,803, and France had several hundred, which were seized in the French campaign against Korea and loaned back to Korea in 2010 without an apology. In 2010, Prime Minister of Japan Naoto Kan expressed "deep remorse" for

the removal of artifacts, and arranged an initial plan to return the Royal Protocols of the Joseon Dynasty and over 1,200 other books, which was carried out in 2011.

Comfort women

Many South Koreans have demanded compensation for "comfort women", the women who were forced to work in Imperial Japanese military brothels during World War II. Enlisted to the military "comfort stations" through force, including kidnapping, coercion, and deception, the Korean comfort women, most of them under the age of 18, were forced to serve as sex slaves for 30–40 soldiers each day. As the few surviving comfort women continued to demand acknowledgement and a sincere apology, the Japanese court rejected their compensation claims. In 1993, the government of Japan officially acknowledged the presence of wartime brothels, and set up a private Asian Women's Fund to distribute donated money and issue official letters of apology to the victims. As of 2007, according to South Korean government, there are 109 survivors in South Korea and 218 in North Korea.

On December 28, 2015, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and South Korean President Park Geun-hye reached a formal agreement to settle the dispute. Japan agreed to pay ¥1 billion (₩9.7 billion; \$8.3 million) to a fund supporting surviving victims while South Korea agreed to refrain from criticizing Japan regarding the issue and to work to remove a statue memorializing the victims from in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul. The South Korean government will administer the fund for elderly comfort women. On November 21, 2018, South Korea government decided again keep the issue of "Comfort Woman" as a dispute between the two countries by discarding the 2015 agreement and shut down the Japan-funded comfort women foundation which was launched in July 2016 to finance the agreement's settlement. This has become a major point of contention between the two countries.

2. Geographic disputes

Liancourt Rocks

The Liancourt Rocks, called Dokdo ("*solitary island*") in Korean and Takeshima ("*bamboo island*"), are a group of islets in the East Sea/Sea of Japan whose ownership is disputed between South Korea and Japan. There are valuable fishing grounds around the islets and potentially large reserves of methane clathrate.

The territorial dispute is a major source of nationalistic tensions. Since the South Korean government bases its legitimacy partly on the notion that it defends South Korea from North Korea in the North and from Japan from the south, nationalism has been stoked over this issue. Korean tourists visit the remote, inhospitable island, in order to show national solidarity. In Japan, maps mark the islands as being Japanese territory.

In September 1954 and March 1962, Japan proposed to South Korea that the dispute be referred to the International Court of Justice, but South Korea rejected the proposals. Japan again proposed bringing the dispute to the International Court of Justice in August 2012, which was also officially rejected by South Korea on August 30, 2012. In 2005, members of the Japanese prefecture of Shimane (the prefecture to which the islands belong according to the Japanese claim) declared "Takeshima Day", to highlight their territorial claim to the islands. Although the Liancourt Rocks are claimed by both Japan and (both) Koreas, the rocks are controlled by South Korea, which has the South Korean coast guard stationed there, as well as two elderly Korean residents.

Tsushima

A small minority of Koreans claim this island as belonging to Korea, although the South Korean government does not make this claim. Called "Tsushima" in Japanese and "Daemado" in Korean, this island was recorded on the Chinese history book as a territory of Japan from ancient times. This island, as Tsushima Province, has been ruled by Japanese governments since the Nara period. According to Homer Hulbert, this island was a dependency to Silla, one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea. However, according to the Korean history book Samguk Sagi written in 1145, Tsushima is ruled by the Japanese from CE 400. In the 15th century, the King of the

Chosen dynasty of Korea, King Sejong sent troops to the Island occupied it after demanding it to pay taxes to the Korean government

In 2010, a group of 37 members of the South Korean congress formed a forum to study Korea's territorial claims to Tsushima and make outreach efforts to the public. They said that Tsushima was a part of Korean history and that the people on the island are closely related to Koreans. Yasunari Takarabe, incumbent Mayor of Tsushima rejects the South Korean territorial claim: "Tsushima has always been Japan. I want them to retract their wrong historical perception. It was mentioned in the Gishiwajinden (a chapter of volume 30 of Book of Wei in the Chinese Records of the Three Kingdoms) as part of Wa (Japan). It has never been and cannot be a South Korean territory."

The Sea of Japan naming dispute

There is dispute over the international name for this body of water. Japan points out that the name "Sea of Japan" was used in a number of European maps from the late 18th century to the early 19th century, and that many maps today retain this naming. However, both the North and South Korean governments have protested that Japan encouraged the usage of the name "Sea of Japan" while Korea lost effective control over its foreign policy under Japanese imperial expansion. South Korea argues that the name "East Sea" or "Korean Eastern Sea" which was one of the most common names found on old European maps of this sea, should be the name instead of "Sea of Japan."

3. Miscellaneous issues

Censorship of Japanese media in South Korea

After the end of Japanese Occupation, Japanese cultural products such as music, film, and books were banned in both North and South Korea. The boycott was lifted in South Korea starting in 1998. Some Japanese cultural items, including but not limited to manga, anime, and music, have been introduced into South Korea even while they were banned (the South Korean public was not informed of their Japanese origin, though people mostly knew that they were). It is still illegal to broadcast Japanese

music and television dramas over terrestrial signals in South Korea.

Kidnapping of Japanese citizens by North Korea

A 13-year-old junior high school student from Niigata, Megumi Yokota, was kidnapped by North Korea on November 15, 1977. In addition to her, many other Japanese citizens were kidnapped by North Korean agents. In 2002, North Korea admitted to kidnapping 13 Japanese citizens during the 1970s and 1980s, in order to train spies to infiltrate U.S. military installations in Japan. Five people have been released, but the North Korean government claimed that there were eight dead. Japan has pressed for the return of the bodies. However, the Japanese government believes that there are still kidnapped Japanese citizens being held captive in North Korea. North Korea's official statement is that the issue has been settled. Because of the overwhelming number of South Koreans also kidnapped by North Korea, there have been some joint efforts by South Korea and Japan to retrieve their citizens. The issue remains unresolved, but Japan has insisted on an explanation of what happened to their citizens as a precondition for normalizing relations with North Korea.

Origin of Japanese culture

In brief, the Korean points are that through a long history of contact, several important Chinese innovations in culture and technology were transferred to Japan. Several linguistic theories make similar points. In these theories, practices like wet-rice farming, a new style of pottery, and metallurgy, and writing were introduced from China. Buddhism was first introduced to Japan from Baekje in Korea, but the subsequent development of Japanese Buddhism was primarily influenced by China.

In 2008, Japan allowed controlled, limited access to foreign archaeologists, but the international community still has many unanswered questions. National Geographic News reported that Japan "the agency has kept access to the tombs restricted, prompting rumors that officials fear excavation would reveal bloodline links between the "pure" imperial

family and Korea or that some tombs hold no royal remains at all."

Plagiarism of Japanese products

South Korea has been accused of plagiarizing Japanese products. In 2007, a K-pop singer, Ivy, was accused of copying a scene from the Japanese video game movie adaptation *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* in one of her music videos. The court ordered that the video be banned from airing on television, stating that "most of the clip is noticeably similar to scenes from the film".

Kimchi exports

In the 1990s, a dispute arose regarding the marketing of kimchi, considered to be a traditional Korean dish. Kimchi was growing in popularity, and its consumption and production were expanding. Korean manufacturers, however, argued that Japanese kimchi is fundamentally different, in that Japanese manufacturers often skip fermentation and mimic the flavors with additives. South Korean producers argued that this made the product fundamentally different from kimchi, while Japanese producers argued they were simply altering the product to fit local tastes. In 2000, South Korea began lobbying the makers of the Codex Alimentarius, an international food-standards maker which provides voluntary advice to national food agencies, to designate kimchi as only that which is produced in the traditional Korean style. In 2001, the Codex Alimentarius published a voluntary standard defining kimchi as "a fermented food that uses salted napa cabbages as its main ingredient mixed with seasonings, and goes through a lactic acid production process at a low temperature", but which did not specify a minimum amount of fermentation or forbid the use of additives.

Ban on Japanese seafood products

From 2013, South Korea banned all seafood products imported from Japan, due to concerns on the radioactive contamination from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. The ban was extended to Fukushima and seven other Japanese prefectures. The Japanese government

strongly opposes South Korea's decision on placing the ban, insisting that the country's fisheries exports are safe for consumption, with stringent inspection procedures in place. The ban has led Japan to consider taking the issue to the WTO dispute settlement process.

North Korea Launching of Missiles

Japan is concerned that missiles North Korea launched in recent weeks and in May 2019 were likely built with technology from the Russian-designed Iskander, a state-of-the-art short-range ballistic missile that is difficult to intercept. However, Japan needs U.S. cooperation to realize a Japan-North Korean summit to make progress towards settling the issue of Pyongyang's past abductions of Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 1980s. As an economic retaliation to the 'trade conflict' (mentioned below), South Korea might also review whether to end its military intelligence sharing pact with Japan as part of its countermeasures, saying it could be difficult to share sensitive information considering the deterioration of trust between the countries (a key element in the current tripartite security cooperation with the United States).

Trade Conflict

In November 2018, there was a decision by Supreme Court of South Korea that ordered many Japanese companies, including Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Nippon Steel to compensate the families of South Koreans who were unfairly treated and illegally forced to supply labor for World War II war efforts. This decision angered Japanese government, who claim that the issue was settled under the 1965 treaty of normalization of two countries bilateral ties. The Japanese government then as retaliation, announced to tighten the chemical exports such as Hydrogen Fluoride, resist, and fluorinated polyimide on July 1, 2019 which is vital for the manufacture of smart phone screens and semiconductors. Japan also tightened controls on exports to South Korea of Japanese products and services from cars, beer, pen and tours.

Hence, from 28th August 2019, South Korea will be excluded from the Group A (White Country)

status, or trade partners qualified for preferential treatment of simplified export procedures. These controls, according to the government because the South Korea lack the trust of export controls and restriction system. But South Korea reject the Japanese government claims, saying that the move was an "economic retaliation".

CONCLUSION

The state of relations between South Korea/North Korea and Japan will require some serious diplomacy to overcome. Korea has its own domestic policies to consider and so compromising with Japan on historical issues will always be difficult. In submitting the above for your consideration, I hope that it will better inform further discussions on Japan's Foreign /Security Policy" with Korea.

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