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Explaining Conflicts in Japanese-South Korean Relations

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EXPLAINING CONFLICTS IN JAPANESE-SOUTH KOREAN RELATIONS

by

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A plan b submitted in partial fulfillment

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of

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Political Science

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Abstract

South Korea and Japan usually cooperate but occasionally experience periods of conflict that disrupt their relationship. This paper seeks to explain those sporadic periods of conflict using a dynamic theory. This theory posits that South Korean leadership power status coupled with Japanese action on sensitive issues will lead to a period of conflict. President Kim Dae Jung's administration serves as the case study for this paper.

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Introduction

This thesis seeks to answer the question of why South Korea (the Republic of Korea, or ROK) and Japan experience periods of conflict despite various incentives for cooperation. To be clear, when this author refers to periods of conflict, this does not refer to military conflict but rather disruptions in relations (for example, suspension of personnel exchange, backing out of agreements on intelligence exchange). The sporadic periods of conflict in the normally cooperative relationship between South Korea and Japan present an interesting question for political science. For example, in 1997 Japan decided to cancel a fishery agreement with Korea as a result of conflict concerning statements made by Japan's Prime Minister regarding the colonial period.¹ A more recent example of the disruption that arises from these periods of conflict occurred in 2012: South Korea and Japan delayed a meeting between their finance ministers² regarding a free trade agreement because of a dispute about the Liancourt Rocks.³

This kind of disruption contradicts expectations because South Korea and Japan have many incentives to cooperate. For Korea, trade with Japan grew from approximately twenty-nine billion US dollars in 1990 to about one-hundred and five billion in 2011.⁴ Common security concerns provide additional incentives for cooperation. Both South Korea and Japan rely on their alliances with the US to deter North Korea from acting on threats like those it made in

¹ Cheol Hee Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts: Korea-Japan Relations in the Post-Cold War Era," *Asia-Pacific Review*, 15, no. 2, (2008):22-23.

²"Finance ministers of Korea, Japan share need to resume FTA talks," *The Korea Times*, November, 24, 2012, accessed April 4, 2013, www.koreatimes.co.kr

³ The Liancourt Rocks, called Dokdo by Korea and Takeshima by Japan, dispute refers to a dispute over ownership of two small islands in between South Korea and Japan. Japan views ownership of the dispute as a territorial issue while Korea views it as a historical issue. Korea has made efforts to legitimize their occupation of the rocks but Japan claims their occupation is illegal based on historical ownership.

Mark J. Valencia, "Domestic Politics Fuels Northeast Asian Maritime Disputes," *East-West Center: Asia Pacific Issues*, 43, (2000):4, accessed April 8, 2013.

⁴ Asia Regional Integration Center: Tracking Asian Integration, "Economic and Financial Indicators, South Korea and Japan," Accessed April 3, 2013. www.aric.adb.org

2013.⁵ The question of why South Korea and Japan experience periods of conflict in their relationship greatly concerns international relations because the behavior of North Korea endangers both countries, and increased cooperation between South Korea and Japan, such as sharing of intelligence, would lead to a more secure and stable environment in East Asia.

Broader international relations theories cannot explain these sporadic periods of conflict but several scholars have presented theories designed to explain why these periods of conflict occur.⁶ Victor Cha uses a quasi-alliance model to claim that the periods of conflict can be explained by Japan and South Korea's perception of the security commitment of the United States. While Cha's theory is useful in explaining conflict behavior, there are some periods which it cannot explain.⁷

Hwang Jihwan presents a model focused on the colonial legacy, and argues that South Korea will choose to increase military spending when it experiences abandonment fears.⁸ Hwang's theory fails to explain the post-Cold War era when Japan and Korea experienced abandonment fears but did not choose to increase military spending.⁹

Seung Ji Woo argues that US engagement, and political coalition governments determine the nature of the relationship between South Korea and Japan.¹⁰ He argues that if the US actively engages and pro-American coalitions are in power then cooperation will occur. Woo's

⁵ Joohee Cho, "North Korea Relocates Long-Range Missile in Latest 'Rhetorical Threat,'" *ABC News*, April 4, 2013.

⁶ The dynamic nature of the relationship makes it difficult for broader international relations theories to explain it. Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 18-19.

⁷ Victor D. Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea," *International Studies Quarterly*, 44, no. 2 (2000): 261-291.

⁸ Jihwan Hwang, "Rethinking the East Asian Balance of Power: Historical Antagonism, Internal Balancing, and the Korea-Japanese Security Relationship," *World Affairs*, 166, no. 2 (2003): 95-96.

⁹ Tim Kane, "Global US troop deployment, 1950-2005," Center for Data Analysis, Report, June 2, 2006. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2004/10/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2003>

¹⁰ Seung Ji Woo, "Puzzle of Korea-Japan Cooperation in the Cold War," *Korean Journal of Political Science*, 37, no.3, (2003): 129-131.

theory does not explain why periods of conflict occur even when the US actively engages and pro-American coalitions are in power. His theory also faces problems when applied to the post-Cold War era because Korean coalitions diverged from their pro-American stance, which led Woo to assume a constant pro-cooperation stance on the Korean side.¹¹

Yoon Tae Ryong proposes a net threat theory to explain the relationship between Japan and South Korea.¹² He describes net threat as combination of perceived threat and forces mustered against the threat. This theory asserts that the credibility of US commitment can also affect net threat. If Japan's and South Korea's perceptions of net threat diverge they will experience a period of conflict. However, it is unclear how Yoon measures converging and diverging threat perception.

Cheol Hee Park combines Yoon's net threat theory, Cha's quasi-alliance model, and Hwang's theory on colonial legacy into what he describes as a convergent-management hypothesis.¹³ He considers convergent-divergent threat perceptions and the escalation-de-escalation of historical controversies as determining the nature of the relationship between South Korea and Japan. Park's theory very accurately explains the dynamic nature of the relationship; unfortunately, he does not clearly define how he measures his variables.

Overall, the existing arguments indicate the importance of historical contentions; Park's treatment of historical contentions as a variable is crucial in explaining the dynamic nature of the relationship. In order to explain the puzzling periods of conflict, this author argues that Japanese action on sensitive historical issues triggers a period of conflict if the Korean president's power

¹¹ Gi-Wook Shin, "South Korean Anti-Americanism: A Comparative Perspective," *Asian Survey*, 36, no. 8 (1996): 793-794.

¹² Tae Ryong Yoon, *Fragile Cooperation: Net Threat Theory and Japan-Korea-U.S. Relations* (New York: Columbia University, 2006).

¹³ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 14-15.

status is high. This theory incorporates escalation of historical contention on both the Japanese side and the Korean side. It is theoretically possible for leadership on either side to avoid escalating conflict. However, this does not happen on the Japanese side as they generally trigger the conflict by taking action on sensitive historical issues.¹⁴

The independent variables for this study are Japanese action on sensitive historical issues and the Korean president's power status. The Korean president's power status is classified as high or low depending on the cohesion or support of his personnel network, and public sentiment regarding his policies. Personnel network cohesion can be measured based on the ability of the president to offer incentives to support his position. Public sentiment can be measured through two aspects: success of policy implementation and the president's handling of criticism. Japanese action on sensitive historical issues is classified as controversial or non-controversial. Specifically, if the Japanese government endorses an action that is perceived as justifying Japanese actions during its colonization of Korea this is considered controversial.

The dependent variable for this paper is the nature of the relationship characterized by periods of cooperation and periods of conflict. Periods of conflict refers to periods of disruption in the relationship between Japan and South Korea. Disruption refers to suspension of personnel exchange, and demands from one government for the other government to take a specific action. Periods of cooperation are characterized by the formation of agreements between the governments.

Kim Dae Jung's presidential administration from 1998 to 2003 serves as the case study for this paper. It provides a period of cooperation then a period of conflict followed by a return

¹⁴ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 29.

to cooperation. It allows for an in case comparison between the different periods of his administration. The measures for the variables will be taken from accounts written about this period in several scholarly articles. Although many of these articles explore topics not directly related to the research question, they provide valuable information about the independent and dependent variables for this paper.

This paper is divided into five sections. The first section will discuss the incentives for cooperation to further demonstrate the abnormality of the periods of conflict, and the importance of the question of why South Korea and Japan experience periods of conflict in their otherwise cooperative relationship. The second section will discuss the existing arguments pertaining to the question and show how they guided the development of my theory. In the third section, the author's theoretical framework will be presented. The fourth section will consist of an in case comparison of Kim Dae Jung's five year administration. The fifth section will consist of a concluding discussion of future implications for the author's theory.

Incentives for Cooperation

The US Factor

Both South Korea and Japan have a close relationship with the United States but the US would like their relationship with each other to be stronger.¹⁵ Following WWII the US set up bilateral security arrangements with countries in Asia to balance against the Soviet threat. This 'hub and spoke' system (The US being the hub and Japan, Korea, Taiwan and other Asian countries being the spokes) provides stability in the region, preventing power rivalries and

¹⁵ Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment," 262-263.

allowing for development of trade.¹⁶ The US cooperates with each of these nations in coordinating the security of the region. South Korea and Japan house bases for the US. However, closer cooperation between South Korea, Japan and the US would provide even greater security for the interests of these countries. The so called drone coalition between the US, Australia, Japan and South Korea exemplifies the kind of security cooperation the US desires. This system will monitor North Korea and China, and foster intelligence sharing between members of this “robotic” alliance.¹⁷ Although this alliance is promising it could be interrupted if Japan and South Korea experience a period of conflict.

Cultural Similarities

South Korea and Japan share many cultural similarities. They are both democratic nations. Both countries have market economies. They are close geographically, separated only by the Sea of Japan. Their political systems are similar in that the political parties in both countries are essentially personnel networks of the party leaders. This close proximity supports a strong tourism industry for both countries. Approximately two million tourists from Korea visit Japan each year¹⁸ and vice versa. Koreans account for the largest portion of tourists who visit Japan each year and with few exceptions Japanese make up the largest portion of tourists who visit Korea.¹⁹ Their leaders regularly meet with each other several times a year. People-to-people exchanges totaled 4.93 million in 2011.²⁰ Korean popular culture is well received in Japan in addition to other parts of the world. This so called ‘Korea Wave’ consists of the

¹⁶ G. John Ikenberry, “American hegemony and East Asia order,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 58, no. 3, (2004): 353.

¹⁷ David Axe, “Drone coalition: Key to U.S. security,” *Reuters*, April 1, 2013.

¹⁸ Japanese National Tourism Organization, “2012 Foreign Visitors and Japanese Departures,” Accessed April 6, 2013. <http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/ttp/sta/PDF/E2012.pdf>

¹⁹ Korea Tourism Organization, “Korea Monthly Statistics of Tourism,” Accessed April, 6, 2013. <http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/eng/tourismStatics/keyFacts/KoreaMonthlyStatistics.kto;>

²⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea. “Japan.” Last updated 2011. Accessed February 5, 2013. <http://www.mofat.go.kr/ENG/main/index.jsp>

growing popularity of Korean cultural exports including television dramas, popular music, movies and video games.²¹ As of 2008, Korea and Japan have shared 113 sister cities; additionally tens of thousands of Korean students study in Japan.²² In 2002, they co-hosted the Fifa World Cup, increasing cultural familiarity.²³

Common Security Concerns

South Korea and Japan share security interests in protecting themselves from China and North Korea. The history between South Korea, Japan and China is complex, leading to complex perceptions of China on the part of Japan and Korea. Japan and China have had numerous wars and competed as rivals in the region until the end of WWII. China's growth in power, both economically and militarily, gives South Korea and Japan a security-based reason to cooperate. According to Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory, South Korea and Japan are facing a choice between balancing against and getting on the bandwagon with a rising China.²⁴ In addition to historical experience, the nuclear arsenal of China should encourage the non-nuclear powers of Japan and South Korea to cooperate to a greater extent.

North Korea presents another regional threat, which also should encourage security cooperation between South Korea and Japan, because it is a nuclear power and its leadership generally acts unpredictably. North Korea sporadically engages in long range missile tests or tests of nuclear weapons. These tests greatly concern both South Korea and Japan, as they are the closest targets for the rogue-state regime of North Korea. In April 2013, North Korea amplified and intensified its rhetoric and took actions as though it was preparing for war. These

²¹ Lara Farrar, "Korea Wave of pop culture sweeps across Asia," *CNN*, December 31, 2010. Accessed April 6, 2013. <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/12/31/korea.entertainment/index.html?iref=NS1>

²² Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 14.

²³ Fifa, "Fifa World Cup, Host Announcement Decision," Accessed April 6, 2013.

http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/mencompwc/51/97/81/ip-201_13a_fwc-host.pdf

²⁴ Stephen Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security*, 9, no.4, (1985):3-9.

actions included cutting lines of communication, shutting down the joint industrial complex in Kaesong, moving long range missiles into strategic positions, and warning other countries to evacuate their embassies in South Korea.²⁵ Although most North Korean rhetoric focuses on anti-Americanism, it also includes South Korea and Japan in the anti-capitalist focused words.²⁶ North Korea possesses the technological capabilities to inflict severe civilian casualties on South Korea and Japan.

North Korea considers the United States its sworn enemy; however, because an attack on the United States may be outside North Korea's capabilities, it may settle for a closer target of South Korea or Japan. These threats from China and North Korea provide significant incentives for South Korea and Japan to cooperate. However, South Korea and Japan have implemented few cross military exchanges or cooperative defensive measures. Periods of conflict between South Korea and Japan interrupt these cooperative efforts. For example, in 2012 they intended to implement a military intelligence exchange program but it had to be suspended when protests broke out in South Korea regarding the program.²⁷ Without these interruptions South Korea and Japan could potentially conduct joint military exercises similar to those that South Korea conducts with the United States. A higher level of cooperation may allow the US to conduct three party military exercises with South Korea and Japan.

Economic Integration

In addition to security related incentives, South Korea and Japan have many economic incentives to cooperate and are becoming increasingly economically integrated. Trade with

²⁵ Larisa Epatko, "Timeline and Maps: North Korea Ramps Up Rhetoric, Missile Systems," *PBS Newshour*, April 5, 2013. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2013/04/north-korea-timeline.html>

²⁶ "N. Korea says it conducted successful underground nuclear weapons test," *USA Today*, October 9, 2006.

²⁷ K.J. Kwon, "South Korea and Japan put military intelligence pact on hold after outcry," June 29, 2012, accessed April 5, 2013. <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/06/29/world/asia/south-korea-japan-pact>

South Korea makes up 6% of Japan's total trade share percentage as of 2011. For South Korea trade with Japan made up 9% of its total trade share percentage in 2011.²⁸ According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, bilateral trade between South Korea and Japan totaled \$1.08 billion in 2011.²⁹ In addition to trade, foreign direct investment indicates economic integration; FDI from Japan to South Korea totaled 4.54 billion in US dollars. This doubled the previous year's FDI.³⁰ South Korea and Japan have been attempting to form a free trade agreement, but the talks discussing the formation of such an agreement are interrupted or delayed when periods of conflict arise.³¹

Cooperation between South Korea and Japan provides more security in the region and is in the economic interests of both these countries. It is puzzling that countries with this level of cultural similarity, economic integration, and these common security concerns would experience periods of conflict. The next section will discuss attempts to explain this phenomenon.

Existing Arguments

Scholars developed several theories to specifically address the question of why South Korea and Japan continue to experience periods of conflict in spite of many incentives for cooperation. These theories include: Victor Cha's quasi-alliance model, Seung Ji Woo's engagement-coalition politics hypothesis, Tae-Ryong Yoon's net-threat theory, Jihwan Hwang's historical antagonism argument, and Cheol Hee Park's convergent-management hypothesis.

²⁸ Asia Regional Integration Center.

²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, "Japan," last updated 2011.

³⁰ "Japan's FDI in Korea hits record high in 2012," *Yonhap News Agency*, February 19, 2013.

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/business/2013/02/19/47/0503000000AEN20130219001900320F.HTML>

³¹ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 14.

Quasi-Alliance Model

Victor Cha sought to answer the question of why South Korea and Japan have volatile relations despite shared security interests throughout the Cold War. To do this he developed the quasi-alliance model. A quasi-alliance is the relationship between two states that are not allied but share a great power as a common ally. In our case, South Korea and Japan remain unallied but are both allies with the United States. Cha argues that South Korean and Japanese perception of the United States' security commitment better explains alliance behavior than either historical antagonism or external threats.

Although he recognizes that both of those factors can have an effect on the relationship and can be an underlying source of cooperation or conflict, he posits that fears of abandonment or entrapment are the key causal variables in determining the alliance behavior of quasi-allies. Fear of entrapment refers to fear of losing power and independence by becoming dependent on another power for security. Fear of abandonment refers to the fear of being abandoned by one's great power ally. If states fear abandonment, they will show greater commitment to cooperation. Strengthening cooperation is the best option for states to address abandonment fears because internal buildup is usually prohibited by cost or culture, this prohibition led to the original formation of the alliance. If states fear entrapment they will show less commitment to cooperation. States will generally show a weaker commitment to the alliance to elicit a response from the ally by which they fear becoming entrapped.

Cha hypothesizes that when quasi-allies experienced asymmetric abandonment or entrapment fears there would be greater friction in the relationship. In turn, he also hypothesizes that symmetric abandonment, or entrapment fears would lead to cooperation. He finds that South Korea and Japan exhibited the expected cooperation, when they feared abandonment by

the US when it pulled out several divisions from both countries during the period from 1969-1971. As part of Nixon's Guam doctrine, which stated that the US would no longer bear the primary defense burden of its Asian allies, the US withdrew approximately twenty thousand soldiers from South Korea and seven thousand from Japan.³² Cooperation was manifest in the 1969 Korea clause and the Okinawa base agreement, which essentially committed Japanese territory to involvement if a second Korean war broke out. Cooperation also took place in the form of economic assistance to boost South Korea's growth.

His other hypothesis was also supported as friction increased during the 1972-1974 period. During this time abandonment fears diverged. As the US pursued détente Japan's fears decreased and South Korea's remained constant. Cha's model works well and provides a basis for departing from traditional theories, such as balance of threat.³³ The alliance behavior of South Korea and Japan contradicts the balancing or bandwagon expectations from the balance of threat theory but can be better explained by abandonment and entrapment fears.

Scholars criticize Cha's model, claiming that it does not explain certain periods or dismisses ways to improve security other than strengthening alliances. Yoon Tae Ryong is concerned with the pre-normalization period and the ineffectiveness of Cha's model at explaining the relationship at this time.³⁴ During this period, from the end of WWII to 1965, the US applied constant pressure to encourage Japan and South Korea to normalize their relations. However, the relationship did not change for many years even with US pressure. Another criticism focuses on Cha's dismissal of internal military buildup as a response to abandonment fears. Although Cha addresses this as a possible response, Hwang Jihwan claims that Cha

³² Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment," 273.

³³ Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment," 263-264.

³⁴ Yoon, "Learning to Cooperate," 24-25.

neglects to consider the United States' pacifying influence in preventing the remilitarization of these nations. Another criticism was that Cha treats historical antagonism as constant, when in reality the level of historical antagonism varies depending on whether leadership chooses to escalate historically charged issues.

Colonial Legacy and Internal Military Buildup

Hwang Jihwan claims that historical antagonism can explain the nature of the relationship between South Korea and Japan. He criticizes Cha's argument saying Cha ignores increases in military spending as a means of increasing security when facing abandonment fears. Facing US disengagement, South Korea opted to increase its military in addition to strengthening its alliance with Japan. Hwang claims that how one state perceives the other is extremely important in determining the nature of their relationship. Specifically, he argues that the historical antagonism surrounding the colonization of Korea by Japan prevents them from seeking alliances with each other even when they experience symmetric abandonment fears. According to Hwang, this occurred in the 1970s when the US attempted to disengage from East Asia. Hwang claims both South Korea and Japan experienced abandonment fears, which Cha describes, but they chose to increase military spending in addition to strengthening their relationship with their quasi-allies. In reality, South Korea and Japan pursued greater security through both increased military spending and strengthening their alliance with each other.³⁵

Hwang's argument has two main problems: his argument does not explain the dynamic nature of the relationship and it cannot explain periods when both states experienced abandonment fears and chose to increase cooperation with their quasi-ally in addition to increasing military spending, such as the post-Cold War era. Hwang includes perceptions caused

³⁵ Hwang, "Rethinking the East Asian," 100-103.

by historical antagonism relating to the colonial legacy of Japan as a factor in his model. Because he treats historical antagonism as a constant, he cannot account for changes in the relationship not caused by abandonment fears. There were periods in the post-Cold War era during which Japan and South Korea experienced abandonment fears but chose to both increase cooperation with each other and increase military spending. Immediately following the end of the Cold War, South Korea and Japan became acutely aware of the probability of a US drawdown in Asia, and demonstrated their level of cooperation with closed door summit meetings to discuss the election of President Clinton in 1992.³⁶

Engagement-Coalition Politics Hypothesis

Seung Ji Woo, like Cha, argues that US engagement determines the nature of the relationship between South Korea and Japan, but he also believes that coalition politics in both nations plays a large role as well.³⁷ He argues active US engagement leads to increased cooperation rather than leading to decreased cooperation as Cha argues.

Woo argues that the US is capable of inducing cooperation between South Korea and Japan. The two independent variables for Woo's argument are US engagement and coalition politics. The two coalitions Woo considered important for this question were anti-communist conservative forces, described as an Alpha coalition, and centrist forces, described as a Beta coalition. According to Woo, both South Korea and Japan have Alpha and Beta coalitions. The Alpha coalition supported a strong alliance with the US while the Beta coalition argued for a balance between the US alliance and alliances with Japan's neighboring countries. Woo argues that when these coalitions mismatch and the US passively engages, friction between the two

³⁶ Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment," 284.

³⁷ Woo, "Puzzle of Korea," 129-130.

countries increases. In contrast, when the pro-American Alpha coalitions hold power in both countries, and when the US actively engages them, then cooperation will increase between South Korea and Japan.³⁸

Although Woo's engagement-coalition hypothesis takes into account important factors in the relationship between South Korea and Japan, there are a few flaws in his argument. Woo's assertion that the US can discourage conflict between its allies through influence and encouragement is flawed. Logically the US would seek to completely prevent its allies from quarreling; the periods of conflict between South Korea and Japan demonstrate the flaw in Woo's assumptions about US influence. It is possible that the US presence prevents South Korea and Japan from escalating their disputes to a higher level. However, if Woo's hypothesis is correct then the conflicts between South Korea and Japan would be prevented by US influence. Instead of actively discouraging conflicts, the US generally remains neutral with regard to historical disputes or disputes relating to the Liancourt Rocks.³⁹ There are also times when the US actively engages, and both countries have Alpha coalitions but periods of conflict still occur. For example, in 2012 a period of conflict relating to the Liancourt Rocks occurred even though both Korea's President Lee and Japanese Prime Minister Noda both belong to Alpha coalitions and the US actively engaged.⁴⁰

Park points out that Woo's assumption that South Korea's coalition is always pro-cooperation is problematic.⁴¹ In the post-Cold War period, the nature of the coalitions in both countries changed dramatically. The Alpha coalitions, which held power for decades during the

³⁸ Woo, "Puzzle of Korea," 133.

³⁹ "U.S. 'Uncomfortable' on Japan Korea Dokdo Spat," *New American Media*, August 26, 2012, accessed April 5, 2013. <http://newamericamedia.org/2012/08/us-uncomfortable-on-japan-korea-dokdo-spat.php>

⁴⁰ Kwon, "Military Intelligence Pact," 2012.

⁴¹ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 16-17.

Cold War, began to lose elections in the post-Cold War era.⁴² When historical tensions are high, South Korea is frequently just as uncooperative as Japan. For example, when controversy over Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine⁴³ arose, Korean lawmakers of both Alpha and Beta coalitions demanded apologies and submitted bills designed to bring more attention to Japanese wartime activities.⁴⁴

Net Threat Theory

Yoon Tae-Ryong seeks to answer the question of why South Korea and Japan experience periods of conflict by combining Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory⁴⁵ with Glenn Snyder's theory of alliance politics.⁴⁶ He develops a theory called Net Threat Theory. Net threat is composed of not only common threats, but also takes into account perceptions of those threats, the parties' abilities to respond to that threat, and the credibility of US defense commitment. If either party perceives the US commitment as unreliable net threat would increase. He hypothesizes that when perceptions of net threat converge the incentives for cooperation also increase. Conversely when perceptions of net threat diverge, incentives for cooperation decrease. He includes conflicting interests as a factor that could explain periods of conflict that occur despite high net threat and incentives for cooperation. Conflicting interests primarily refers to historical animosity related to Japan's colonization of Korea.⁴⁷

Yoon's focus on threat provides a more direct application of balance of threat theory to the relationship between South Korea and Japan but fails to explain its dynamic nature. His

⁴² YoungMi Kim, "Intra-Party Politics and Minority Coalition Government in South Korea," *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 9, no. 2, (2008): 371.

⁴³ A Shinto Shrine dedicated to those who died in the service of the Empire of Japan, including war criminals from WWII.

⁴⁴ Hyung-jin Kim, "Lawmakers visit Japanese Embassy to protest Koizumi's planned Seoul trip," *The Korean Herald*, October, 12 2001.

⁴⁵ Walt, "Alliance Formation," 3-9.

⁴⁶ Snyder, Glenn, "Alliances balance, and stability," *International Organization*. 45, no.1, (1991):121-123.

⁴⁷ Yoon, "Net Threat," 24-26.

theory would be much more useful if the variables were more clearly defined. It is unclear how he determines whether the parties' threat perceptions are converging or diverging. The variable, conflicting interests, also presents a problem because it focuses on historical animosity as an explanation of periods of conflict. Yoon does not clarify how he measures conflicting interests or how historical animosity, a constant, can explain the irregular periods of conflict.

Convergent-Management Hypothesis

Cheol Hee Park attempts to incorporate Yoon's Net Threat theory, Hwang's emphasis on colonial legacy, and Cha's Quasi-alliance model in order to develop a dynamic theory that adequately explains the relationship between South Korea and Japan. He describes his argument as a convergent-management hypothesis. Like Yoon, Park considers converging or diverging threat perceptions as extremely important in determining the nature of the relationship between South Korea and Japan. He also incorporates historical antagonism as a factor. However, rather than treating historical antagonism as a constant or underlying source of conflict, Park treats historical antagonism as a variable that can be escalated and deescalated by political leadership's management of issues related to historical antagonism. Park argues that historical contention can be manipulated in an expansive manner or a curtailing fashion. The interaction of these variables determines the level of cooperation or conflict in the relationship between South Korea and Japan. Table 1 shows the four possible results from the interaction of historical contention and threat perception.

Table 1: Relationship between historical contention and threat perception

		Threat Perception	
		Converging	Diverging
Historical Contentions	De-escalating	Durable cooperation	Cooperative outlook with friction
	Escalating	Cooperation disturbed by sporadic conflict	Longstanding friction

Park also incorporates Cha’s emphasis on US management of their alliances. He includes US alliance management as an intervening variable. Park argues that if the US manages its alliances with South Korea and Japan in an asymmetric way it will lead to conflict between them. If the US engages one party more than the other, it would be considered asymmetric alliance management. Table 2 shows the effect Park believes US alliance management has on conflict between South Korea and Japan.

Table 2: Engagement styles and results

	Symmetric	Asymmetric
Engagement	Containing conflict	Amplifying conflict
Disengagement	Magnifying conflict	Protracting conflict

Park focuses on the post-Cold War era for his case studies. He finds support for his hypothesis in several cases. However, Park has a similar problem to Yoon because he does not

specify how he measures his variables.⁴⁸ Park's theory is fairly useful in explaining the dynamic nature of the relationship between South Korea and Japan; however, there are a few issues with his argument. Park specifies his variables but he does not specify how he measured each of those variables. This in turn makes it difficult to determine how those variables interact. During the period of President Kim Dae Jung's administration it is unclear how Park determines when the states' threat perceptions are converging or diverging or even when the states perceived North Korea as a threat.

Park's theory lacks an explanation as to why political leadership in both Korea and Japan would handle historical contention in a way that leads to periods of conflict. There are serious consequences for escalating historical controversy. For example, periods of conflict have disrupted talks on the formation of a free trade agreement, and personnel exchange.⁴⁹ It is unclear why political leadership would choose to escalate historical controversy and thereby cause periods of conflict to occur. Park's theory is useful in that it attempts to explain the dynamic nature of the relationship, but the lack of clarity as to how the variables are measured reduces its value.

After reviewing the cases discussed by Park, it appears that each period of conflict was associated with disputes relating to Japanese wartime activities, or in Park's terms, escalation of historical controversy. Park pointed out that most disputes originated on the Japanese side and also that Korea overreacted.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 24.

⁴⁹ Kwon, "Military Intelligence Pact," 2012.

⁵⁰ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 29.

Theoretical framework

This paper seeks to answer the question of why South Korea and Japan experience periods of conflict despite incentives for cooperation, through testing the theory that the South Korean president's power status, coupled with Japanese action on sensitive historical issues determines the nature of the relationship between South Korea and Japan. This theory focuses on escalation of historical controversy as the cause of conflict. Presidential power status is related to Woo's theory, and both independent variables are related to Park's theory. Woo includes coalition politics as a factor in his study, but he emphasized US influence as the primary factor in determining the nature of the relationship.⁵¹ Similarly, Park includes escalation of historical controversy as an independent variable but places more weight on convergence and divergence of threat perception, and also includes US engagement as an intervening variable.⁵²

For this paper's question, the independent variables are South Korean president's power status and Japanese action on sensitive issues. The dependent variable in this paper is the nature of the relationship characterized by periods of conflict and periods of cooperation between South Korea and Japan. The interaction of the independent variables has the potential to trigger a period of conflict in the relationship between South Korea and Japan.

Independent variables***South Korean President's Power Status***

The South Korean president's power status is a combination of many factors but for this study we will measure it based on support of personnel network and public sentiment regarding his policies. South Korean presidents derive a large portion of their power from the support of

⁵¹ Woo, "Puzzle of Korea," 137.

⁵² Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 31.

their personnel network. South Korean political parties differ from political parties in other parts of the world in that they are not solely ideologically based.⁵³ Parties operate as entourages for powerful politicians, who entice legislators to support them not based on ideology but rather on allocation of incentives to aid the legislators' careers.⁵⁴ For example, Korean politicians have a tendency to receive nearly all of the votes in their home region but receive very few votes in their opponent's home region because of expectations that the politician will allocate spending to their home district. Studies on Korean politics refer to this tendency as regionalism. If a politician receives endorsement from a political party they can benefit from the party's home region advantage and receive fiscal support for campaigning in swing vote areas.⁵⁵

They keep the support of their personnel network through providing various incentives to people who supported them in the presidential election and to those who support them in the legislature. These incentives take place in the form of appointments to posts in the government, party endorsement, and pork-barrel spending in the supporters' home province. The South Korean president has significant power in determining the national budget and uses this power to entice additional legislators into his personnel network. The support of the president's personnel network can be measured in terms of the president's ability to provide incentives, and legislator's roll call votes.⁵⁶

The other part of power status is public sentiment which will be measured based on the president's success in implementing his policies (success meaning the policy achieves what it was intended to do) and his handling of criticism. If the president handles negative public

⁵³ David I. Steinberg, Myung Shin, "From Entourage to Ideology? Tensions in South Korean Political Parties in Transition," *East-West Center Working Papers*, 9(2005):1.

⁵⁴ Kuniaki Nemoto, "Committing to the Party: The Costs of Governance in East Asian Democracies" (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2009): 3-4. <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/1666h5nw#page-152>

⁵⁵ Nemoto, "Committing to the Party," 45.

⁵⁶ Nemoto, "Committing to the Party," 109, 212-213.

sentiment regarding his policies in a way that still allows him to maintain the cohesion of his personnel network then his power status will be considered high.

Japanese Action on Sensitive Issues

Japanese action on sensitive issues can be defined as the extent to which Japanese leadership takes public actions on historically charged issues. Historically charged issues are those issues relating to Japanese wartime activities. Issues that usually cause conflict are comfort women, Japanese history textbooks, and visits to the Yasukuni Shrine.⁵⁷ Japanese action on sensitive issues can be classified as controversial or non-controversial. When a leader makes statements that can be construed as justifying Japanese wartime activities, this is an example of controversial Japanese action on sensitive issues. When a Japanese leader takes a passive position on a sensitive issue this is an example of non-controversial action on a sensitive issue. Additionally, lack of action on sensitive issues will be classified as non-controversial action.⁵⁸

Dependent variable

Nature of the relationship

Period of Conflict

Period of conflict can be defined as the extent to which South Korea-Japanese relations exhibit the characteristic of disruption. Disruption can be measured by looking for suspension of personnel exchanges, suspension of negotiations, such as those relating to a bilateral free trade

⁵⁷ Comfort women were Korean women who worked as sexual slaves for brothels organized for the Japanese army. There is controversy about the extent to which the Japanese government was responsible for the organization of these brothels, and how responsible it is for compensating the women involved. Chunghee Sarah Soh, "The Korean 'Comfort Women: Movement for Redress,'" *Asian Survey*, 36, no.12, (1996): 1226-1227.

⁵⁸ Action on sensitive issues is based on a search for stories on sensitive issues in newspapers from the period of the case study.

agreement between South Korea and Japan, and by demands of one government for specific action by leadership of another country.

Period of Cooperation

Period of cooperation can be defined as the extent to which South Korea-Japanese relation exhibits the characteristic of collaboration. Specifically, periods of cooperation will be characterized by agreements between the governments, setting up and participating in joint ventures. The New Fisheries Agreement in 1998 is an example of collaboration.⁵⁹

Hypothesis

The interaction of these two variables leads to periods of conflict in the relationship between South Korea and Japan. High Korean presidential power status will not immediately lead to a period of conflict; nor will Japanese action on a sensitive issue immediately lead to a period of conflict. It is the interaction of these variables that causes the dependent variable to change from a period of cooperation to a period of conflict. Table 3 shows the interaction of these variables.

Table 3: Relationship between power status and action on sensitive historical issues

		Action on Sensitive Issues	
		Controversial	Non-controversial
Power Status	High	Conflict	Cooperation
	Low	Cooperation	Cooperation

⁵⁹ United Nations, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, "Japan/Korea Agreement," accessed February 4, 2013, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/Y4698B/y4698b0k.htm>

Case Study

The case study for this paper consists of the five year term of President Kim Dae Jung from 1998 to 2003. This in case comparison is useful because leadership in South Korea and Japan changed little during this period.⁶⁰ South Korean presidents serve five year terms. A period of five years may seem like a short time, however, as Park observed, even a South Korean President who begins with a positive attitude toward Japan can change his attitude several times during his administration.⁶¹ It is important to note that this case was selected from the post-Cold War era, since presidents previous to this period were characteristically authoritarian. An authoritarian regime from the Cold War era would have to spend less effort maintaining power status than the democratically elected administrations of the post-Cold War era. Kim Dae Jung's administration is also a useful case because it is was not the first administration in the post-Cold War era. The ten year period between the first democratically elected president and Kim Dae Jung's time in office gave the Korean people time to acclimatize to rule under a democratically elected president. This period gave time for Korea to develop a relationship with Japan which reflected the influence of the domestic populations of both countries. This included the development of strong opinions on issues such as Japanese wartime activities and how the South Korean government should respond to Japanese action on those issues.

This case is useful because of the strong highs and lows in the relationship between South Korea and Japan. Kim Dae Jung's administration started off with an extremely positive relationship with Japan, as demonstrated by the "New Korea—Japan Partnership Co-Declaration," but deteriorated to the point of the Korean National Assembly unanimously

⁶⁰ Kim Dae Jung was president throughout the period while Koizumi was prime minister for the majority of the period.

⁶¹ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 26-30.

adopting a resolution requesting that Japan revise certain passages in one of their textbooks. The fact that relations improved soon thereafter also demonstrates the value of this case. Within a five-year period the relationship experienced a period of cooperation, a period of conflict and then returned to a period of cooperation. From the beginning of Kim Dae Jung's administration in February 1998 to January 2001 a period of cooperation occurred. From January 2001 to October 2001 a period of conflict occurred. From October 2001 to the end of Kim Dae Jung's administration in 2003 the relationship between South Korea and Japan returned to a period of cooperation.

Kim Dae Jung's administration shares many similarities with other Korean administrations and has no unique features that would make it unrepresentative for our study. Similar to other Korean presidents, Kim Dae Jung began with good relations toward Japan but experienced deterioration in that relationship later during his presidency. One might consider Kim Dae Jung unique in that he was the first president to be elected as an opposition party candidate.⁶² However, in Korean coalition politics candidates frequently change parties, and parties may exist for only a short time before merging with another party.⁶³ This makes his election from the opposition party less relevant to our study.

Period of Cooperation: February 1998 to January 2001

Kim Dae Jung entered office in February 1998; he had many goals when he came to power. These goals included taking measures to allow the Korean economy to recover from the

⁶² Up until Kim Dae Jung was elected the president had always been part of a strong anti-communist, pro-US coalition consisting of the Grand National Party, several Korean newspapers, retired military officers, and conservative NGOs.

Sung-han Kim, Geun, Lee, "When security met politics: desecuritization of North Korean threats by South Korea's Kim Dae-jung government," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 11, (2011): 25-55.

⁶³ Kim Young Mi, "Intra-party politics," 370-375.

Asian financial crisis, and improving relations with Korea's neighbors, specifically Japan and North Korea. It is important to note that he was elected with a plurality of 40 % of the vote because he formed a coalition with Kim Jong Pil and a highly conservative party, the United Liberal Democrats.⁶⁴ Even with this partnership Kim Dae Jung's coalition did not have a majority in the National Assembly. He attempted to entice additional legislators to support him but failed to gain enough support to appoint Kim Jong Pil as prime minister, which he had promised to do if elected. The financial crisis also put restraints on Kim Dae Jung's ability to provide incentives for his supporters.⁶⁵ These restraints on Kim Dae Jung's ability to provide promised incentives to his supporters contributed to lessened support in his personnel network and indicate that his power status was low at this time. The lack of support in his personnel network is further demonstrated by the failure to pass a majority of the 100 reform measures proposed during Kim Dae Jung's first six months as president.⁶⁶

During this period the Japanese side was characterized by non-action, but on one occasion they took non-controversial action on a sensitive issue. In April 1998, Japanese leadership responded to efforts to raise funds for comfort women in a non-controversial way.⁶⁷ During this time South Korea's leadership sought to raise funds to pay living expenses of former comfort women, now in their seventies and eighties. Despite efforts from Kim Dae Jung, the Japanese government refused to contribute to these efforts, or make an apology as requested. The Japanese government responded by stating they had settled all legal obligations with other nations in an agreement after the war ended.⁶⁸ This refusal to contribute to the fund or extend an apology for the Japanese Army's role in organizing comfort women brothels could have

⁶⁴ Kim, Lee, "Desecuritization of North Korea," 36.

⁶⁵ Kim, Lee, "Desecuritization of North Korea," 39.

⁶⁶ Mansourov, "A Turning Point," 160.

⁶⁷ Soh, "Comfort Women," 1226-1227.

⁶⁸ Strom, Stephanie, "Seoul Won't Seek Japan Funds for War's Brothel Women," *New York Times*, April 22, 1998.

triggered a period of conflict with South Korea.⁶⁹ However, because the response was non-controversial it did not lead to a period of conflict. If the response had been controversial, for example, if it denied the Japanese government's involvement in organizing the brothels or explicitly denied the possibility of future compensation for the comfort women then it would have led to a period of conflict.

Despite restraints Kim Dae Jung took cautious steps toward his goals. He began his administration by engaging Japan in various ways, seeking to build a future-oriented relationship. Under his leadership, South Korea and Japan concluded the New Fisheries Agreement which established a fishing zone shared between the two countries. This was significant because a previous agreement was interrupted in the past because of controversy surrounding the disputed Liancourt Rocks. The agreement specifically avoided establishing ownership of the Liancourt Rocks due to the controversy surrounding that issue.⁷⁰

Another significant advance in South Korea-Japan relations occurred in October 1998 in the form of the "New Korea—Japan Partnership Co-Declaration." Under this declaration, made by leadership from both countries, South Korea and Japan agreed to pursue a future oriented relationship through various activities. Prime Minister Obuchi made a sincere and heartfelt apology for Japan's wartime activities as the leaders discussed this agreement. The areas for future cooperation included: promotion of a deeper understanding of history, promotion of universal principles of freedom, democracy and the market economy, regular review of cooperation with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs as the supervisors of the partnership, expansion

⁶⁹ The issue of comfort women surfaced again in 2007 but this time led to a period of conflict between South Korea and Japan.

Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 27.

⁷⁰ United Nations, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, "Japan/Korea Agreement."

of personnel exchange, expansion of defense exchanges, policy towards North Korea, and resolution of global issues.⁷¹

There were also other indicators of a high level of cooperation between them. During this early period of Kim Dae Jung's administration South Korea and Japan were able to reestablish research on the formation of a bilateral free trade agreement between the two countries. This led to a joint study that lasted until 2000. This spirit of cooperation continued as South Korea and Japan co-participation in the ASEAN+3 meetings which focused on resolving the Asian financial crisis.

These economic and political agreements indicate the dependent variable was a period of cooperation. The restraints on Kim Dae Jung's ability to provide the incentives he promised to his personnel network contributed to low cohesion in his party and coalition as well as decreased support from his personnel network. The lack of support in Kim Dae Jung's personnel network indicates the presidential power status was low during this period. The only Japanese action on sensitive issues during this period was non-controversial because it did not deny Japanese involvement in the comfort women issue but merely said that the issue had been resolved with previous agreements.

Period of Conflict: January 2001 to October 2001

In January 2000 Kim Dae Jung renamed his party the Millennium Democratic Party and with this change of name announced his engagement plan with North Korea.⁷² This move was made in anticipation of the coming parliamentary elections in April. The economy was

⁷¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration: A New Japan-Republic of Korea Partnership towards the Twenty-first Century," accessed February 6, 2013. <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/korea/joint9810.html>

⁷² Kim, Lee, "Desecuritization of North Korea," 40- 41.

beginning to recover, removing some of the restraints that prevented Kim Dae Jung from providing promised incentives to his supporters.⁷³ Kim Dae Jung took advantage of the parliamentary elections by providing funding for his supporter's campaigns, endorsing supporters to give them a regional party advantage, and promising appointments to government and government-owned business positions in order to entice new legislators to support him.⁷⁴ Specifically, Nemoto found that regions which were hotly contested received more subsidies when the president's party was a minority, as it is in our case.⁷⁵ The ability to offer aid to supporters in the parliamentary election indicates a high level of support in the president's personnel network and therefore high presidential power status.

Kim Dae Jung began to take measures to advance his policy of engagement with North Korea. Specifically, he sought to hold a North-South Summit with North Korea. He announced the agreement to hold the summit shortly before parliamentary elections in April 2000. Despite this announcement, and his efforts to entice more legislators into his personnel network, his party was unable to obtain a majority in the National Assembly. Even without the majority in the legislature Kim Dae Jung was able to accomplish his goal of a summit with North Korea in June 2000 by relying on the support of his personnel network.⁷⁶ The level of support in Kim Dae Jung's personnel network at this time indicates high presidential power status.

As Kim Dae Jung increased the cohesion in his personnel network criticism from the conservative coalition also increased. Specifically, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

⁷³ By this time the Korean economy was bouncing back and many of the measures implemented by the OECD were being revised.

John West, "Kim Dae-jung: A tribute," *OECD Observer*, accessed April 6, 2013.
http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/3080/Kim_Dae-jung:_A_tribute.html

⁷⁴ Nemoto, "Committing to the Party," 234, 277.

⁷⁵ Nemoto, "Committing to the Party," 301.

⁷⁶ Kim, Lee, "Desecuritization of North Korea," 43.

focused on ending corruption, cronyism and regionalism in the South Korean government made various accusations against members of Kim Dae Jung's coalition. The NGO, the PSPD or Human Society for Participatory Democracy, released a list of supposedly corrupt politicians, on this list was Kim Dae Jung's coalition partner Kim Jong Pil.⁷⁷ Kim Dae Jung's sons were also accused of accepting illegal campaign contributions. Despite these criticisms Kim Dae Jung maintained the support of his personnel network and held the summit.

However, criticism following the summit indicated that the cohesion of his alliance and personnel network faced challenges. He returned from the summit making several announcements about agreements reached therein. He obtained funding for a joint tourism venture of Mount Kumsang in North Korea and the establishment of a joint industrial complex in Kaesong.⁷⁸ Kim Dae Jung's success in holding the inter-Korean summit was met by heavy criticism from parts of the conservative coalition, and from Kim Dae Jung's coalition partner Kim Jong Pil. This criticism focused on lack of reciprocity from North Korea. The meeting between Kim Dae Jung and President Bush gave this criticism more weight when Bush expressed similar concerns and his desire for a way to be sure of North Korean disarmament.⁷⁹

The high level of criticism peaked in late 2000 and early 2001; the Ministry of National Defense in Korea released a white paper stating that they considered North Korea as much of a threat as they had before the inter-Korean summit in June 2000.⁸⁰ Public opinion on Kim Dae Jung's engagement policy with North Korea was divided for South Koreans. Although his engagement policy was positively accepted by seventy-one percent of the population,

⁷⁷ Kim, Lee, "Desecuritization of North Korea," 42.

⁷⁸ Mark Manyin, Dick Nanto, United States Government, Congressional Research Service, "The Kaesong North-South Korean Industrial Complex," April 18, 2011. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34093.pdf>

⁷⁹ "Bush's Korean Skepticism," *The Economist*, March 8, 2001, accessed April 4, 2013.

<http://www.economist.com/node/526186?zid=309&ah=80dcf288b8561b012f603b9fd9577f0e>

⁸⁰ Kim, Lee, "Desecuritization of North Korea," 39.

approximately fifty percent felt that the government was giving too much for nothing, and sixty-four percent wanted the government to slow down the engagement process.⁸¹ A sharp drop in the perception of North Korea as a cooperative partner occurred between summer 2000 and January 2001.⁸² Despite the opposition from conservative forces Kim Dae Jung's personnel network remained intact. The fact that Kim Dae Jung was able to maintain his personnel network cohesion despite criticism from the opposition indicates that his power status was high at this time.

Early in 2001 the Japanese Ministry of Education announced that a new history textbook would likely pass the textbook review process.⁸³ The textbook was created by a group in Japan that sought to prevent history from being taught in a way that portrayed Japan as a country to be hated.⁸⁴ Koreans perceived this history textbook was right wing leaning, and believed that it portrayed the colonization of Korea in a more positive light than acceptable. Approval of a textbook that softened the portrayal of Japanese wartime activities is classified as controversial because it was interpreted as a move to depart from the Japanese constitution, inspire greater nationalism, and isolate Japan from its neighbors.⁸⁵ The independent variable is controversial action on sensitive historical issues. This controversial action coupled with Kim Dae Jung's high power status led to period of conflict in the relationship between South Korea and Japan.

⁸¹ Byung-Hoon Suh, "Kim Dae-Jung's Engagement Policy and the South-South Conflict in South Korea: Implications for U.S. Policy," *Columbia International Affairs Online*, April 2, 2001, accessed April 6, 2013. <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/sub01/>

⁸² A survey indicated that the percent of people who considered North Korea an enemy increased from 4% in June to 20% in January. There was also decrease in the percentage of people who viewed North Korea as a partner South Korea should help from 43% to 32%.

Kim, Lee, "Desecuritization North Korea," 43.

⁸³ Kathleen Woods Masalski, "Examining The Japanese History Textbook Controversies," *Japan Digest*, November 2001.

⁸⁴ Masalski, "Japanese History Textbook."

⁸⁵ Anthony Rowley, "Japan plays with fire by doctoring history," *The Business Times Singapore*, April, 19, 2001.

President Kim responded by recalling Korea's ambassador to Japan and urging Japan to reevaluate its review of the textbook. When Japan did not take any action regarding the textbook, the Korean government asked for specific revision of thirty-five passages in the disputed textbook. This time the Japanese government denied the request for revision.⁸⁶ In addition to the demands for revision, the Korean government also suspended discussions to increase cultural exchange, and discouraged private groups from participating in bilateral exchange events like soccer matches.⁸⁷ Eventually the Korean National Assembly adopted a unanimous resolution requesting revision of the disputed history textbook. The textbook was published without the requested revision. The disruption in their relationship also caused the suspension of military exchanges between Japan and South Korea.⁸⁸

Continuing the period of conflict Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi visited the Yasukuni Shrine in August 2001. This action was met with various protests in Korea and Japan. Visiting the shrine is controversial because it is interpreted as paying homage to Japanese war criminals responsible for the atrocities by Japanese forces committed during WWII. Members of Korea's National Assembly responded with demands for an apology and introduced bills designed to bring to light Japanese wartime atrocities.⁸⁹ The recall of the Korean ambassador and the various demands made by the National Assembly of Korea indicate disruption in the relationship, and that this was a period of conflict.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflict," 28-32.

⁸⁷ Isa Ducke, "The History Textbook Issue 2001: A successful citizens' movement or foreign intervention," *German Institute for Japanese Studies*, Working Paper, 2002.

⁸⁸ Kim Kwang-tae, "Seoul Suspends Military Exchanges With Tokyo Over Textbook Dispute," *Korea Times*, July 13, 2001.

⁸⁹ Kim Hyung-jin. "Lawmakers visit Japanese Embassy to protest Koizumi's planned Seoul trip." *The Korean Herald*. October 12, 2001.

⁹⁰ The ambassador was recalled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he remained away from Japan for over a week.

Kim Dae Jung's ability to support his personnel network in the parliamentary elections and his ability to maintain personnel network cohesion despite criticism indicate his power status was high during this period. Both the support of the history textbook and Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine indicate that Japanese action on sensitive historical issues was controversial during this period. The suspension of military exchanges, the discouragement of bilateral exchange programs, and the demands from the Korean government indicate this was a period of conflict.

Period of Cooperation October 2001 to February 2003

South Korean and Japanese relations returned to a period of cooperation in October 2001. In September 2001 Kim Dae Jung's personnel network lost much of its cohesion, due to a vote of no confidence conducted against Lim Dong Won, the architect of the "Sunshine Policy," by the National Assembly. North Korea voiced its support of Lim Dong Won on the eve of the vote. Kim Jong Pil, Kim Dae Jung's coalition partner, perceived this as a North Korean effort to try to influence South Korea policy decisions and left the coalition with Kim Dae Jung to rejoin the Grand National Party and the conservative coalition. Because of the nature of Korean coalition politics Kim Jong Pil took his ULD party with him. This led to the collapse of Kim Dae Jung's cabinet and reduced his power status to a low level as his personnel network no longer had cohesion. Kim Dae Jung continued to try to advance his policy but found little success without the legitimacy of his coalition and support from the legislature. He essentially entered an early lame duck period following the collapse of his cabinet.⁹¹

Victor Cha, "Questions, Questions, and More Questions..." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, accessed April 8, 2013. http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0102qjapan_korea.pdf

⁹¹ Kim, Lee, "Desecuritization of North Korea," 38.

Japanese leadership took action on the sensitive issue of Japanese rearmament on October 29, 2001 but because Kim Dae Jung's power status was low this did not lead to a period of conflict. On October 29, 2001, the Japanese Diet passed the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures bill, so that they could support the US military in Operation Enduring Freedom.⁹² This action can be classified as controversial because it marked a departure from the previously solely self-defense force. Despite this action on this sensitive issue, a period of conflict did not occur. The period of cooperation continued because of the low power status of Kim Dae Jung resulting from his lack of personnel network support or cohesion.

The dependent variable can be seen in the period of cooperation evidenced in the various forms of collaboration during this period. The return to cooperation took place in a few ways. The fact the textbook was not widely adopted decreased tension between South Korea and Japan, and the period of conflict eventually gave way to the normal relationship characterized by cooperation.⁹³ The textbook dispute led to the establishment of a joint history research committee in October 2001. This committee was formed in hope of avoiding future disputes of this nature.

The period of cooperation continued in the co-hosting of the 2002 World Cup. This event led to strong sentiments of cooperation because of the support the population of each country gave the other's team at games that took place in their country.⁹⁴ Cooperation continued following this event through the end of Kim Dae Jung's administration in 2003.

⁹² Jacob Brown, "Catalysts, Choices and Cooperation," *University of Washington* 52, (2005).

⁹³ Masalski, "Japanese History Textbook."

⁹⁴ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflict," 31.

Conclusion

Despite incentives for cooperation South Korea and Japan experience periods of conflict in their relationship. There are many explanations as to why these periods of conflict occur. However, the strong relation of these periods of conflicts to the escalation of historical controversy made it prudent to test for a relationship between them. The sporadic occurrence of these periods of conflict made it necessary to examine what made historical controversy become prominent enough to cause disruption in the otherwise cooperative relationship between Japan and South Korea. This led to the hypothesis that high power status of the Korean president coupled with Japanese action on sensitive historical issues leads to periods of conflict. The hypothesis was supported by this in-case comparison. When the Japanese Ministry of Education approved the controversial history textbook in 2001 Kim Dae Jung's administration responded with a hardline approach. This was because Kim Dae Jung had to maintain his personnel network support. However, when Japanese leadership approved expansion of their defense force and when Kim Dae Jung's power status was low, following the collapse of his personnel network, a period of conflict did not occur.

It would be prudent to test the theory from this paper against other case studies. Future studies in this area should develop a method to control for other plausible causes of periods of conflict. Such studies should specifically test for variables suggested by other theories that sought to answer this question. This theory should be applied to other Korean administrations to further test the findings of this paper. Although the sensitive historical issues brought up during Kim Dae Jung's administration only included comfort women, visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, and history textbooks, it would be prudent for future studies in this area to observe other sensitive issues specifically the island disputes regarding the Takeshima Rocks.

This theory should also be expanded to test countries with similar sporadic periods of conflict. Although it is likely the countries would need to have similar historical controversy for action on sensitive issues to interact with the high power status of the other country. In more generalizable terms, a former aggressor state's actions on sensitive historical issues interacting with the power status of the former "victim state" should be considered as a contributing factor to periods of conflict.

Tables

Table 1: Relationship between historical contention and threat perception⁹⁵

		Threat Perception	
		Converging	Diverging
Historical Contentions	De-escalating	Durable cooperation	Cooperative outlook with friction
	Escalating	Cooperation disturbed by sporadic conflict	Longstanding friction

Table 2: Engagement styles and results⁹⁶

	Symmetric	Asymmetric
Engagement	Containing conflict	Amplifying conflict
Disengagement	Magnifying conflict	Protracting conflict

Table 3: Relationship between power status and action on sensitive historical issues

		Action on Sensitive Issues	
		Controversial	Non-controversial
Power Status	High	Conflict	Cooperation
	Low	Cooperation	Cooperation

⁹⁵ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 20.

⁹⁶ Park, "Cooperation Coupled with Conflicts," 22.

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