

Book Guide

The Japan–South Korea Identity Clash

In this book, CFR Senior Fellow Scott A. Snyder and coauthor Brad Glosserman investigate the roots of fractured relations between Japan and South Korea and their ongoing threat to the region and the world. Teaching notes by the author.

Summary

Japan and South Korea are Western-style democracies with open-market economies committed to the rule of law. They are also U.S. allies. Yet despite their shared interests, shared values, and geographic proximity, divergent national identities have driven a wedge between them. In *The Japan–South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States*, Scott A. Snyder and Brad Glosserman investigate the roots of this split and its ongoing threat to the region and the world. Snyder and Glosserman isolate competing notions of national identity as the main obstacle to a productive partnership between Japan and South Korea. Through public opinion data and interviews, they show that fundamentally incompatible, rapidly changing conceptions of national identity in Japan and South Korea—and not struggles over power or structural issues—have complicated territorial claims and international policy.

This book is suitable for undergraduate and graduate courses in East Asian studies, comparative politics, and international relations.

Discussion and Essay Questions

Courses in East Asian studies or comparative politics

1. How does the collective memory of South Korea's colonial experience influence its contemporary perception of national identity? How does the collective memory of Japan's experience in World War II shape its contemporary sense of national identity? What national projects (such as holidays, monuments, education, and cultural products/media) perpetuate or shape these identities?
2. Fifty years have passed since the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea was signed. In what ways is the relationship between the two countries similar to what it was in 1965? In what ways is it different?
3. How has U.S. involvement in Northeast Asia promoted cooperation between Japan and South Korea? How has its involvement hindered or restricted cooperation?
4. Identify cases of postcolonial reconciliation that may provide lessons for Japan and South Korea. Why are these examples helpful, and why may they be insufficient?

Courses in international relations

1. What role does public opinion play in international relations? How does public opinion affect Japan–South Korea relations, and U.S. alliances with each of these countries?
2. To what extent has leadership aided friendly Japan–South Korea relations since the 1990s? Cite specific examples of when a Japanese prime minister and South Korean president have implemented policies to enhance cooperation or tilt the dial toward favorable attitudes in either publics.
3. To what degree are realist, liberal, or constructivist schools useful in explaining the tensions between South Korea and Japan?
4. From a U.S. perspective, what role do Japan–South Korea relations play in its rebalancing strategy?
5. What is the "Grand Bargain," and why would or wouldn't it be effective in improving Japan–South Korea

relations?

6. How does the rise of China influence Japan-South Korea relations? Will it aid or hinder cooperation? Make reference to opinion polls on shared values and threats in each country.

Discussion and Essay Questions

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