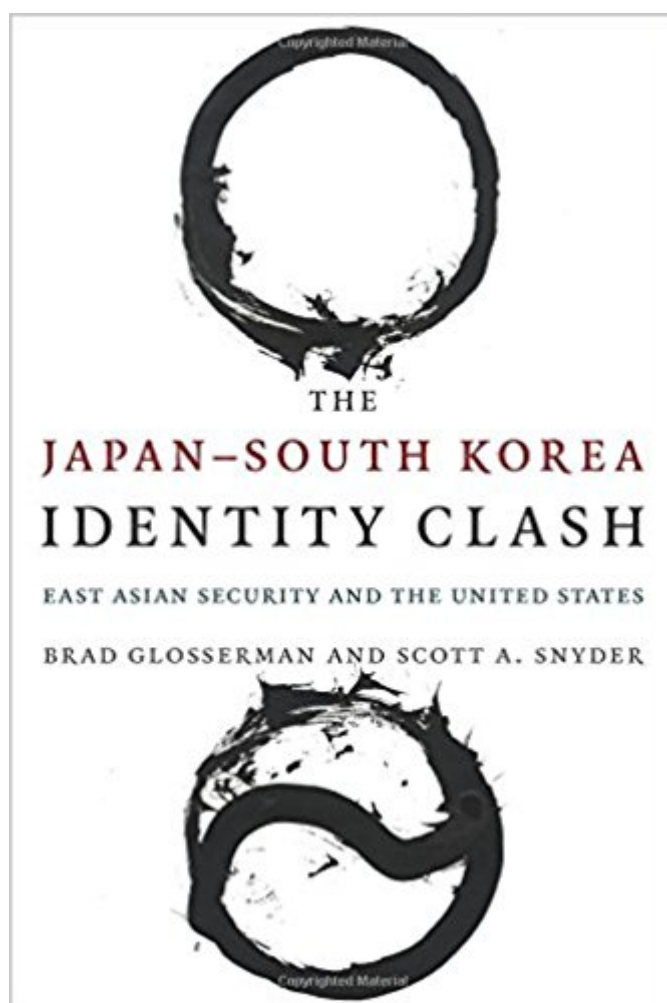


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# The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security And The United States (Contemporary Asia In The World)



## Synopsis

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. Drawing on decades of expertise, Brad Glosserman and Scott A. Snyder investigate the roots of this split and its ongoing threat to the region and the world. Glosserman and Snyder isolate competing notions of national identity as the main obstacle to a productive partnership between Japan and South Korea. Through public opinion data, interviews, and years of observation, they show how 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. Despite changes in the governments of both countries and concerted efforts by leading political figures to encourage U.S.–ROK–Japan security cooperation, the Japan–South Korea relationship continues to be hobbled by history and its deep imprint on ideas of national identity. This book recommends bold, policy-oriented prescriptions for overcoming problems in Japan–South Korea relations and facilitating trilateral cooperation among these three Northeast Asian allies, recognizing the power of the public on issues of foreign policy, international relations, and the prospects for peace in Asia.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Easy to read, this book covers a very timely topic, as many pundits, officials, and experts are

struggling with the issues that are raised. I can think of no book on Japan and South Korea together and on their relationship that is a serious rival. (Gilbert Rozman, Princeton University)

In *The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash*, Brad Glosserman and Scott Snyder unbundle one of the most consequential and seemingly illogical puzzles in contemporary East Asia. Whether or not scholars and policymakers agree with their call for a bold American move to reset relations between these two critical allies and democracies, it is impossible to ignore the authors' pathbreaking analysis or the strategic consequences they point to in the current impasse. (Michael J. Green, former special assistant to the president and senior director for Asia at the National Security Council)

Brad Glosserman and Scott Snyder lay bare in this book the dueling narratives of Japan and South Korea. Both modern, democratic, and market-driven economies animated by twenty-first-century possibilities, Japan and South Korea nevertheless are mired in historical resentments and misunderstanding that continually cloud the future. This political alienation between Seoul and Tokyo provides a vexing challenge for American foreign policy, and the authors here offer valuable insights into how to mitigate and manage the bruised feelings, apprehensions, and latent rivalries that shape one of Asia's most dynamic and least understood relationships. *The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash* is required reading for anyone seeking to better understand both the possibilities and the inherent limitations of this complex relationship. (Kurt M. Campbell, former assistant secretary of State for Asia and Pacific affairs, 2009-2013)

A thoughtful and enlightening read. (Japan Times)

This book offers crucial insights into the identity variables that have changed amid the shifts in domestic and external circumstances such as Korea's democratization and newfound national pride, and the end of the Cold War that brought the core allies of the U.S. together under America's strategic leadership. (The Korea Herald)

A useful overview of an important trilateral relationship. (Foreign Affairs)

A quick and satisfying read that will appeal to scholars, students, and policy makers.... Recommended. (Choice)

A comprehensive study that masterfully weaves in a wide range of related topics. (Seoul Journal of Korean Studies)

A highly readable and invaluable analysis. (Journal of American-East Asian Relations)

A critically important and essential addition to academic library International Studies reference collections in general, and Korean-Japanese supplemental studies reading lists in particular. (The Midwest Book Review)

[An] outstanding work. (Pacific Affairs)

Brad Glosserman is the executive director of the Pacific Forum, an independent program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Scott A. Snyder is senior fellow for Korea studies and director of the program on U.S.-Korea policy at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Glosserman and Snyder know East Asia, they know it very well. This timely and informative book covers the gamut of issues that are currently impacting Korea, Japan, and US and their various security arrangements. Moreover, the exhaustive list of polls, interviews, and anecdotes highlight their wealth of experience in dealing with East Asia Regionalism. There really isn't any major development in the region that is not touched. Nevertheless, this is clearly a policy book (not an academic book), exemplified by the interesting suggestions for trilateral cooperation in the final chapter and the weak theory development in the first. Although Glosserman and Snyder contend that identity is critical to understanding regional relations and overcoming historical animosities, the concept is underdeveloped and not consistent throughout the book. Chapter Two is the closest to operationalizing identity (Japan's), but reads more like a laundry list of polls and various issues that impact Japanese security politics instead of a coherent conception of identity. Moreover, there is little explanation on what poll or what percentage of respondents is significant. In some places, a 50% outcome is significant, and in others 60% is not. There's also little context given to when the poll was given and how various international and domestic events may have impacted the polls (this is done at times, but inconsistently applied). Chapter Three is more problematic because it has less data (half the citations and much less polling data) and is more descriptive of Korean politics, as opposed to analytical. And some of the descriptions are lacking - some regimes are discussed for less than two pages (some even less than one). Identity as a variable is also much less called upon in the chapter. As a result, by Chapter Four, identity plays a background role in Japan-Korean relations. The chapter provides a great summary of various highs and lows in the relationship, but rarely calls upon how identity shaped the relationship beyond Korea dislikes Japan for the past, and Japan has not done a great job addressing historical issues. By the time Chapter Five and Six discusses the US, it's difficult to determine exactly what to do with the identities in regards to regional cooperation. I believe that if the polling data went back further than the previous 15 years, a longer discussion of what identity really means (how it develops, is maintained, and changed) was provided, and other discourses were analyzed (textbooks, editorials, etc.), then we could get a better idea about what issues form the core aspects of Korean and Japanese identity. Since the book covers so much without clear operationalization of identity, it seems that all of the important developments in their histories are their identities. Regardless of the shortcomings in theory development, I would highly recommend this book for policymakers interested in novel ways of addressing weaknesses in the alliance and general audiences interested in East Asia security and politics. The book provides a lot of data that is worth hunting down and analyzing and many

eye-opening anecdotes. It's also a quick and easy read - you can finish in under a day if you commit yourself - although I would recommend going back to catch interesting details and polling data results. Accept the book for what it is, an easy-to-digest rundown of an important region with complex histories. They cut through a lot of the political games played by the Koreans and Japanese and reveal core issues that need to be addressed and possible ways to overcome past failures. Although I am skeptical that their suggestions would bear fruit, especially since they do a great job at elucidating the animosity that has developed over the years, they are not unreasonable suggestions. The US needs to play a greater role, it is a stakeholder in the region and its importance will only grow. Moreover, Japan and Korea will eventually have to change their paths because the status quo is simply not working and the poor relations will eventually have more dire consequences than hurt feelings.

This book provides great insight into a topic of immediate policy relevance. It also makes an important contribution to scholarship in International Relations. The on-going tensions between South Korea and Japan presents a strategic problem for the U.S., which has strong alliances with each of these states. It also presents a puzzle for scholars of International Relations, given that there are good reasons for thinking that these states should have better relations than they do. The book synthesizes a vast quantity of public opinion data to explain why historical grievances continue to plague relations between South Korea and Japan and offer an intriguing proposal for a trilateral U.S.-Japan-ROK deal to resolve them.

Beginning with the research question, the authors ask why Japan and South Korea have trouble getting along despite holding shared values and interests. In short, the book is an exploration of the obstacles to further security cooperation between the two countries. Much to the detriment of international security and the strategic interests of the countries involved, the Japan-South Korea relationship is one of the most commonly forgotten, willfully neglected, internally conflicted, and undervalued bilateral relationships in the contemporary international order. Not only is it essential to maintaining peaceful relations between the two countries, but it also has serious implications for the struggle over international order itself. Brad Glosserman and Scott A. Snyder offer a fascinating and timely analysis of this relationship, which when set in the context of the Asia-Pacific and enduring American interests in the region, sets the stage for a wider discussion concerning prospects for alliance cooperation and the establishment of more permanent regional security architectures. As one might expect from these two authors, the book is impeccably written, and is organized logically

in a manner that assists the authors in providing information and support for their argument. It begins with a brief history and contemporary analysis of the problems facing the Japan-South Korea relationship before moving into individual chapters that explore the identity issues facing each country. In terms of style, the text straddles the gap between a cutting edge policy text and a sophisticated academic tome, largely due to the methodological approach selected by the authors. But this is hardly a critique. Indeed, the discipline of International Relations could use more authors that are capable of adopting a policy-focused approach while successfully deploying sophisticated theoretical lenses in support of in-depth analysis. Methodologically, despite a claim to analytical eclecticism that is only marginally warranted by the succeeding chapters, the text follows a constructivist approach that privileges exploration of perception, identity, and ideology. Probably due to the dominance of realist and liberal perspectives in American political science and its sub-disciplines, the authors take great pains to justify their approach, arguing convincingly that realist and liberal models alone are insufficient in explaining the analytical complexity of the problem at hand. In supporting their arguments, the authors explore identity issues by extrapolating from polling data. Not having been seduced by the quantitatively focused biases of American political science, I am most intrigued when the authors deviate from their predominantly constructivist analysis of identity and explore (intentionally or unintentionally) its more loose Foucauldian and poststructuralist interpretations. Predominant discourses and implications for power relations are at play here, and are cited repeatedly for discussion. Now confessing my own theoretical biases, I would have liked to see a more immediately poststructuralist take on the subject. On the other hand, while an even more sophisticated poststructuralist approach might have made the text more theoretically impactful and conceptually useful for understanding some of the relevant conflicts and issues, it would also undermine the policy accessibility of the text. Accordingly, my complaint on methodology is relegated to the area of aesthetics. Moving beyond methodological considerations, the authors are most passionate when discussing their recommendations for a trilateral approach to resolving the Japan-South Korea identity clash. Concerning themselves also with American security interests, the authors draw on their vast experience in proposing a detailed and uniquely insightful “Grand Bargain” whereby the United States would serve as a committed leader in prompting closer alliance ties between its two most important regional partners. To explore this “Grand Bargain” in detail, buy the book. But briefly, some have leveled the charge that this bargain represents capitulation to idealism. This criticism is unjust. While it would require an extreme level of compromise from both South Korea and Japan (for instance, it requires Japan’s renunciation of claims to

Dokdo/Takeshima and Korea's final and authentic acceptance of Japanese gestures aimed at amending historical wrongs), such a compromise is essential for avoiding long-term insecurity resulting from mistrust, historical animosity, and neglect. As the authors note, even die-hard oxford-wearing conservative nationalists (such as Richard Nixon) are fully capable of discerning the value of compromise if it advances their long-term security interests. In any case, this is an inspiring and insightful text that offers sound analysis and actionable suggestions. While it is not particularly cutting edge in the application of theory (though it is certainly cutting edge in its policy analysis and recommendations), it successfully manages to straddle the unfortunately large divide between academia and the policy world. I would recommend this book to anyone who wonders why South Korea and Japan just can't seem to get along. **DISCLOSURE:** I was provided with a review copy of "The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States" by the Center for Strategic and International Studies Pacific Forum. It goes without saying (but I must say it anyway) that the provision of a sample copy did not in any way affect my evaluation of the aforementioned text.

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