

Emotions and South Korea-Japan Relations

Sean Lee Starkweather

(James Madison University)

This article seeks to determine the role which emotions play in the foreign policy outcomes between South Korea and Japan. In line with the contemporary shift away from viewing states as “black boxes,” the recent expansion of psychological inquiry into foreign policy decision-making (FPDM) has introduced a wide range of new lines of inquiry into how certain policy outcomes are impacted by heuristics, analogical reasoning, and other cognitive shortcuts. However, much of the research has been centered on how human cognition impacts the decision-making process; of more limited interest has been the role of human affect. Using the ongoing South Korea-Japan trade dispute as a case study, this analysis serves to assess official public communications between the Korean and Japanese governments through discourse analysis and reveals the emotional elements within the decision-making processes and its effect on the origin and escalation of the trade dispute in 2018 and 2019. This study finds that emotions have a significant impact on how policymakers perceive one another and how issues are framed, thereby helping determine the viability of certain policy options. Emotions played a role large enough to compel South Korea and Japan to engage in trade conflict despite having a mutual interest in deep cooperation on regional security issues.

Introduction

A continuing pattern in the contemporary study of international relations (IR) has been a departure among scholars from viewing the state as a “black box,” operating as a rational, unitary actor in international politics, back towards accepting the assumption of the importance of sub-state forces—including individuals as a valuable unit of analysis—and thereby

analyzing sub-state variables. One of the more interesting directions this analytic shift has taken has been the incorporation of cognitive and social psychology into theoretical and empirical analysis of state behavior in IR. Advances in the cognitive sciences and social psychology have allowed IR scholars to theorize a historically persistent yet under-valued theme: the role that emotions play in foreign policy decision-making (FPDM).¹ Positively, this trend has led to the growth of behavioral IR and given constructivist and discourse analyses a new variety of tools and insights with which to work, in turn providing new models of emotional decision-making to help explain foreign policy outcomes.² Recent work by political scientists such as Karen E. Smith has sought to advance a framework in this area through case studies of FPDM in the EU.³

To further this new direction in IR and assess its universality, it is appropriate to test the universality of Smith's framework by applying it in other regional contexts. Indeed, one of the characteristics (and limitations) of this line of research has been that much of it remains confined to case studies of American and European instances of FPDM.⁴ In contrast with Western European politics, which has remained along with the US as the primary regions of focus for those studying emotion in politics, East Asia is a unique arena with its own distinct characteristics. In particular, the open display of affect is more permissible in East Asian international relations. As Smith points out, a driving principle behind the EU as a "meeting regime" was the management of emotion.⁵ Thus, while policymakers in the West prefer to characterize their political behavior as "rational," many Korean and Japanese commentators perceive politics as leaving space for both affect and rationality—one Korean observer even described Koreans as "emotional with rational reasons."⁶

More broadly, both South Korea and Japan have viewed the other as behaving emotionally towards them and attribute the inability to develop more friendly relations to such emotions.⁷ In this sense, the relationship between the two states today is reminiscent of Europe before the twentieth century, where long-lasting rivalries and negative perceptions greatly shaped the foreign policies of each political entity. Furthermore, while Smith's analysis of EU decision-making relies heavily on intergroup emotions theory to assess EU institutions, whereby she argues that external events can provoke a powerful and shared emotional response that pushes the actors to collectively take action, it is useful to consider the applicability of social identity theory

in East Asia, where the role of an in-group out-group bias can also be examined. Currently, only two international relations scholars, Karl Gustafsson and Todd H. Hall, have investigated the role of emotions in foreign policy within the East Asian context through a case study of the “history problem” in the relationship between China and Japan.⁸ Other political scientists have focused on European politics, with Michelle Pace and Ali Bilgic applying emotions-based models to EU politics in the Middle East, and others such as Tuomas Forsberg and Deborah Welch Larson examining specifically Russian foreign policy.⁹

While Smith, Pace, and Bilgic applied their frameworks in the context of an intergovernmental organization (IGO)'s FPDM, and while Hall focused on the Sino-Japanese relationship, this study will seek to assess the impact of emotions on the origin of the ongoing South Korea-Japan trade dispute by applying discourse analysis to public communications between Korea and Japan through official—primarily executive agencies—and unofficial mediums. Considering the salience of East Asian rivalries in the face of China's continued rise, and the unexpected outbreak of antagonism between two ostensibly cooperative states, questions remain over how a dispute between South Korea and Japan could have occurred despite the existence of perceived shared threats. Moreover, given the expanding literature dealing with the role of historical memory both between South Korea and Japan and within the broader context of East Asian IR, there is now a unique opportunity to assess how emotions could help explain the trade conflict and East Asian foreign policies more broadly.

Human Affect in IR

There is an immediate, fundamental problem which must be addressed on the question of affective politics: how can emotions be conceived of in the context of foreign policy decision-making? This question has found no easy answer, and there remains a rich debate within a variety of different fields of study as to the nature and boundaries of emotion.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the nebulousness of human affect has discouraged scholars from pursuing the study of affect as it relates to politics, especially at the international level of analysis, where there has been a long tradition of viewing the state as a rational, monolithic actor unaffected by non-systemic variables. While this analysis does not seek to settle the debate, it is still necessary to establish a baseline for how to think

about emotion before being able to determine its potential effects.

Similar to the political theorist Michael Walzer's distinction between "thin" and "thick" morality—an innate, universalist versus a constructed, particularist morality—emotions can be conceptualized in a two-level manner.¹¹ The sociologist Eduardo Bericat's distinction between primary and secondary emotions is of particular interest in the context of inter-state relations: primary emotions are those which are innate and universal—fear, lust, anger, and so forth—while secondary emotions are those which are conditioned by the broader social context within which one finds themselves—guilt, love, nostalgia, and similar forms of emotion.¹² While innately-driven emotions can serve as remarkably powerful drivers of political behavior—the classic realist reading of Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War would emphasize the role of fear in inducing a Spartan reaction against Athens—Brent Sasley, a political scientist at the University of Texas at Arlington, argues that context-dependent emotions can also be established as causal by serving as motivating forces for political action via shaping and being shaped by the sociocultural environment.¹³ Emotions, therefore, hold significant implications for state behavior by impacting FPDM at all levels of analysis, whether it be individual or group-focused.

A key implication is that context-dependent emotions play an important role in the development and consolidation of group identities. As Sasley notes of the psychological literature, in-group out-group biases are induced through affect, and one's emotional dispositions end up being shared in part because members operate within the same social and cultural environment. This becomes especially true when hierarchies are introduced, and prestige becomes a salient issue. In other words, people begin to think and "feel" for and with the in-group rather than for themselves.¹⁴ The psychologist Henri Tajfel's landmark 1971 study on social categorization and intergroup behavior, which has inspired an entire subgenre of research on social identity, makes clear that people are much more willing to favor and less willing to punish members of an in-group, and the inverse for members of an out-group.¹⁵ In foreign policy analysis (FPA), these conditions have been examined for several decades—the psychologist Irving Janis' case studies of various political crises, which assessed the rise of groupthink present in the US' FPDM processes, offer ready examples of the application of psychological analysis in international politics.¹⁶

However, such analyses have often focused on cognitive rather than emotional processes and remain well within the domain of FPA, not IR in a broader sense.¹⁷ Just as significantly, much of the current FPA literature focusing on cognition and emotion has been focused specifically on the consequences of cognitive and emotional processes on a relatively small scale—typically, at the level of elite groups of decision-makers or of individual leaders.¹⁸ To satisfy the more general context of IR, a framework which can approach emotions from the individual level of analysis to a much larger group level of the state as a whole is needed.¹⁹

While the methods of studying emotions in politics remain in their early stages of development and quantitative methods remain elusive, discourse analysis, as well as evaluating emotions by way of analyzing how they are represented and communicated through speech, images, analogies, and other vehicles for meaning, offer at least an indirect medium. Fortunately, there already exists a large volume of research from political scientists on the impact of images, analogies, and other vehicles of meaning; Robert Jervis' work on the "logic of images" and Yuen Foong Khong's work on analogical reasoning serve as foundational texts in these areas and have contributed to a rise in research on how one's way of thought can impact decision-making.²⁰ However, like the FPA literature dealing with social and cognitive processes, the focus has remained on cognition. Yet, images and rhetoric can produce powerfully emotive responses within in-groups; the Korean concept of *han* (한 or 恨), as an example, encapsulates and helps induce a great deal of negative emotions and memories stemming from the Japanese colonial period among Koreans.²¹ This form of collective affect which appears to permeate throughout the state apparatus and, oftentimes, even the general public, inevitably has consequences in the domain of foreign policy, especially, as will come to be apparent, in Korea-Japan relations.

The Korea-Japan Trade Dispute

On July 1, 2019, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) approved a decision to begin the process of removing South Korea from its trade whitelist, which granted countries preferential treatment with regards to export controls on a variety of materials and goods, and force exporters of certain resources (e.g., hydrogen fluoride) to apply for individual licenses to export to Korea.²² This development certainly came as a shock to many, as one headline from the Korean

newspaper *Kyunghyang Sinmun* suggested: “*Ilbon dodaeche wae?*” (“Japan, why on Earth?”). Japan’s move incited a tit-for-tat response by South Korea, which promptly removed Japan from its own whitelist for trading privileges and threatened to leave the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), an intelligence-sharing agreement.²³

While METI’s decision is marked as the ostensible beginning of the trade conflict, South Korea and Japan dispute the true origins. Japan strongly asserted that the cause was that “the Japan-ROK relationship of trust including in the field of export control and regulation has been significantly undermined,” presumably by South Korea.²⁴ This was reiterated by then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.²⁵ In other words, the decision was largely made because of trade-related considerations—South Korea was allegedly failing to comply with existing export controls.²⁶ However, this was quickly contradicted by South Korea, which noted that METI’s policy came just a couple of months following South Korea’s Daejeon District Court’s 2019 ruling against Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, a Japanese industrial company, approving a request to seize Mitsubishi’s trademark and patent assets.²⁷ Tensions had in fact first emerged prior when, in October 2018, South Korea’s Supreme Court ruled that Nippon Steel and Sumitomo Steel, two of Japan’s largest steel producers, had utilized forced Korean labor and that it must financially compensate the surviving laborers with roughly US \$89,000.²⁸

Some observers have rejected the importance of either the “history problem” or emotions in explaining the outbreak of the trade conflict.²⁹ Takuya Matsuda and Jaehan Park argue that history is just a *prima facie* cause of the initial dispute. Noting Japan’s growing status as a sea power and South Korea’s insecurity as a result of oscillating between “continental and maritime orientations,” they argue that the trade war is representative of a more general resurgence of geopolitical competition in East Asia as the region slides back into a familiar balance-of-power dynamic.³⁰ A similar view is forwarded by Lauren Richardson, who acknowledges the relevance of the “history problem” but argues that the trade dispute must be placed within the broader strategic environment.³¹

Specifically, North Korea’s shift in policy to non-aggression in January 2018 led to a divergence between Japanese and Korean strategic priorities with regards to North Korea; while South Korea accepted Kim Jong-un’s conciliatory gesture in the 2018 New Year’s Address by suggesting cooperation at the Winter Olympics, Japan believed North

Korea to not have fundamentally changed their foreign policy.³² Henry Storey, a political analyst at Dragoman, posited that President Moon's decision not to interfere with the court's decision and tame hostilities was derived from Moon's foreign policy priorities. Noting that the Democratic Party of Korea maintains a Korean nationalist ideology, Storey argues that issues raised by Japan would have been subordinate to inter-Korean relations, which Moon has consistently emphasized.³³ Thus, while geopolitical realities acted as a push factor towards cooperation with Japan, Moon may not necessarily view relations with Japan as desirable if it leads to the focus shifting away from North Korea.

Others, however, posit more historically-minded approaches to the trade conflict. Rejecting the Abe administration's insistence on the 2018 court rulings playing no role in the updated trade policies, Wrenn Yennie Lindgren, Eun Hee Woo, Ulv Hanssen, and Petter Y. Lindgren argue that the main cause was the refusal of both countries to acknowledge one another's identities following the development of a "peace culture" in Japan and democratization in South Korea.³⁴ In their view, the trade conflict was just another materialization of a heightened form of outdated identity politics. In a similar vein, Chris Deacon, a doctoral candidate at the London School of Economics and Political Science, posits a comparatively more complex view in arguing that it is in fact the reconstruction of identities in South Korea and Japan during the post-war era which is the source for the hostilities exhibited; the politics of remembering in Korea, wherein Japan is an aggressor, and the contrasting politics of forgetting in Japan, wherein Korea is emotional and irrational for dwelling on the past, is responsible for causing specific foreign policies.³⁵ S. Nathan Park, an international lawyer and non-resident fellow at the Sejong Institute, in explaining a missed opportunity for reconciliation between the two states at the 2018 Winter Olympics, asserts that "Japanese diplomacy is caught up in messy grievances with South Korea, not a cold-eyed, interest-based analysis."³⁶ Implicated here is the notion that non-strategic issues are being passionately pursued in a manner which a rationalist approach would view as undesirable.

While the existing literature does much to provide needed context to the ongoing dispute, there has been a lack of research which seeks to examine in greater depth the decision-making processes which could explain how the foreign policies leading to the dispute were shaped at the top as well as how it could have lasted longer more

than two years. Furthermore, while analyses by scholars such as Chris Deacon reveal a great deal about the impact of historical memory, many have tended to give greater attention to public discourses rather than governmental rhetoric and therefore do little to hint at the role of emotion in FPDM; this is likely in part due to the greater volume of material available from media outlets, newspapers, and social media posts, as well as the occasional obscurity associated with official statements.³⁷ Nonetheless, in order to begin to understand the significance of emotion in the making of foreign policy decisions, it is necessary to examine the discourse between the South Korean and Japanese states.

While the methods of studying emotions in politics remain in the earliest stages of development and quantitative methods remain elusive, discourse analysis, as well as evaluating emotions by way of analyzing how they are represented and communicated through speech, images, analogies, and other vehicles for meaning, offer at least an indirect means of deriving meaning from public statements given by state officials. Moreover, while much of the FPA literature deals with instances of crisis or times of stable peace, the Korean-Japanese trade dispute offers an in-between situation, where crisis conditions (e.g., decisions must be made rapidly) are not met, yet there is a clear sense of conflict. As such, Korea-Japan trade relations offer a rather unique case for analysis.

Social Identity and Korean-Japanese Relations

As Todd Hall establishes, emotions are 1) a product of decision-making, and 2) used to help achieve desired foreign policy ends.³⁸ The use-value of this “emotional diplomacy” comes from its capacity to help frame issues in ways which are conducive to invoking favorable reactions in other audiences or shaping how other states perceive them and their intentions.³⁹ However, emotions can also play a role in shaping which issues receive emphasis and which policies are viable options in the first place. The trade conflict could therefore distract South Korea and Japan from more pressing geopolitical concerns or push a state to divide its attention among several different issues, thereby removing its ability to focus all its efforts on a single one.⁴⁰ Henri Tajfel’s groundbreaking social identity theory, from which the importance of in-group out-group bias is established, also posits that 1) people categorize others into groups to understand them in a more simplistic manner (social categorization); 2) people’s social identity derives from which groups

they belong to (i.e., “I belong to the Korean/Japanese nation”), the content of which derives from the features and norms of the group—violations of norms, which diffuse emotions, can invoke emotional responses (social identification); 3) people compare their group with others for the sake of self-esteem (social comparison)—this often is the underlying process behind stereotyping and prejudice.⁴¹ Tajfel’s central hypothesis is that in so doing, people will look to determine negative aspects of out-groups to enhance their own self-image.⁴² Social identity, in turn, “determines emotions and behavior.”⁴³ In-group out-group biases are induced through affect, and emotional dispositions of an individual can end up being shared in part because members operate within the same social and cultural environment. In other words, people begin to think and feel for and with the in-group rather than for themselves.⁴⁴

As is standard in global politics, Korean-Japan relations fit the characteristics which allow for the application of the social identity theory. South Korea and Japan, as do all other states, demarcate specific categories of global politics along national lines (“I am Korean, you are Japanese”); both the Korean and Japanese governments promote a strong sense of national identity, indicating a strong social identity with which policymakers themselves associate with, and there are established norms grounded in legal doctrine and historical memory (social identification); and both often make implicit comparisons by invoking stereotypes, a feature which will soon be examined (social comparison).⁴⁵ The beginning of a trade dispute quickly involved nationalist sentiments which are at their core emotional and nonrational—this would have also strengthened a sense of a conflict between an in-group (either Koreans or Japanese) against an out-group (the other side) and thereby increased barriers to cooperation.⁴⁶ These notions are critical in contextualizing the messaging between the two states in the lead-up and at the onset of the trade dispute.

Emotions in Korean-Japanese Discourse

Following the South Korean court’s rulings in 2018, then-Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono issued a public statement asserting that “[the] decision is extremely regrettable and totally unacceptable... [Japan] strongly demands that the [ROK] take appropriate measures, including immediate actions to remedy such breach of international law.”⁴⁷ (Breaches of international law can be reconceptualized as a type of norm

violation.)⁴⁸ On January 4, 2019, via a question-and-answer session from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Kono drew a red line: “if unjust disadvantages occur for Japanese companies, the Government of Japan will naturally have to take various measures.”⁴⁹ In fact, Kono referred to the possibility of “unjust disadvantages” for Japanese companies three separate times.⁵⁰ Senses of justice often find their base in emotion and are shaped by emotional dispositions; reactions deriving from violations of one’s sense of justice are fundamentally emotional responses.⁵¹ Even if the perception of unjustness or unfairness derives from a belief that international law has been breached—that is to say, an international norm—responses to norm violations are nonetheless emotionally grounded as a result of being tied to one’s social identification (in this case, Japan being a member of international society). Thus, assertions by MOFA that the dispute is a matter concerning international law, and that “prioritizing personal sentiments” is undesirable, neglect the emotional component of social groups responding to norm violations, even ones enshrined in law. Soon after Kono’s public statement, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Korea referred to the Japanese emperor as “son of the main culprit of war crime” in an interview with Bloomberg and demanded a Japanese apology over the comfort women issue. Asked about the Speaker’s comments, Kono described them as “exceedingly impolite and unacceptable,” adding that “the Government of Japan strongly requests an apology and retraction.”⁵² This was repeated at a February 16 press conference following Kono’s attendance at the Munich Security Conference, where Kono once again described the comments as “truly regrettable.”⁵³

As an important note, a limitation in assessing East Asian communications relative to EU communications is the propensity in East Asia to use language in much more implicit, indirect, subtle ways—statements which are typical of European and American press releases, such as “the European Union is appalled by event X,” would find an East Asian equivalent in “this action X is deeply regrettable.”⁵⁴ Certainly, the true meaning of these comments does not go unnoticed by Korean and Japanese audiences. In one instance, Taro Kono was asked by a reporter in the February 12 MOFA press conference to explain why he decided to issue a strong request as it related to discussions on the Japan-ROK Agreement on the Settlement of Problems, which dealt with issues pertaining to laborers

forced to work in Japan during the early-to mid-twentieth century.⁵⁵

In addition, two considerations must be noted: 1) Japan and South Korea failed to pursue a legal solution to the issue, and 2) Japan ultimately resorted to unilateral policy changes. On July 1, 2019, Japan's METI announced that South Korea would be removed from its list of "white countries," citing, "Japan-ROK relationship of trust including in the field of export control and regulation has been significantly undermined."⁵⁶ President Moon recognized the breakdown of trust but saw the source as METI's policy shift.⁵⁷ In many ways similar to senses of justice, senses of trust also find an emotional base, and in this context there was a mutual perception of a loss of trust between South Korea and Japan as a direct result of the court cases and subsequent reaction.⁵⁸

Another interesting point to consider is Moon's framing of the dispute as a "conflict." In a July 15 meeting with his senior secretaries, Moon declared that South Korea "will prevail over this situation."⁵⁹ This sentiment was repeated in an August 2 meeting, where he promised that Korea would "never again lose to Japan."⁶⁰ This suggests a powerful emotional tint to Moon's perception of the dispute—one compounded by a memory of a Korea oppressed—which shapes what Moon perceives as viable options and directions for pursuing relations with Japan. Specifically, it is possible that Moon could have felt that "softer" options, such as seeking a reversal of the Supreme Court decision or attempting to offer concessions, were simply off the table in the face of Japan's aggressive policy shifts. Moon's reference towards a reopening of "deep wounds" also suggests a perception in which there is a conflict requiring swift and aggressive action when confronted.⁶¹ Indeed, in terms of policy, South Korea responded to Japan's export controls in kind by dropping Japan from its own list of "white countries" and threatening to unilaterally exit from GSOMIA, an intelligence-sharing agreement between the two countries that was previously seen as a strong indicator for a more positive form of Korea-Japan relations.⁶² While some may conceive the Korean response as an example of a tit-for-tat response in a game theoretic sense, thereby indicating rationality, the sentiments expressed by Moon and the Japanese foreign minister alike do much to reveal the affect-based character of the dispute.

Though it is difficult to ascertain to what degree specifically emotions are responsible for South Korean and Japanese policy choices which contributed to a downward spiral in their relations, it is

clear, at least, that both states viewed the other's behavior as being guided by emotion. Moon, after noting that he "express profound regret," asserted in the August 2 cabinet meeting that Japan's policy represented "undeniable trade retaliation against our Supreme Court's rulings"—retaliation, of course, being a common product of anger. This sentiment was expressed earlier by then-Korean Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy Sung Yun-mo.⁶³ Kono, responding to Korea's decision to leave GSOMIA, asserted that "Japan-ROK relations continue to be in an extremely severe situation because of the series of exceedingly negative and irrational actions," and that he "would like to resolutely protest that such a decision has been made."⁶⁴ Despite both governments' insistence to the contrary, it is apparent that the escalation of the trade dispute was retaliatory in nature. Fundamentally, as is made evident by South Korean and Japanese communications, emotions had a significant impact on the perceptions of policymakers and helped frame the issues as well as determine which options were viable. In the context of the trade dispute, the viable options were retaliatory; that the crisis actually distracted both states from theoretically more pressing geopolitical concerns is suggestive of emotion being a driving force behind both South Korean and Japanese decision-making.

The surprising degree to which emotions have driven the relationship becomes even more apparent when considering how the discourse over the conflict evolved over time. In 2021, as Japan was preparing for the Olympic games that would be hosted in Tokyo that summer, South Korean officials had been in talks with their Japanese counterparts to host for the very first time a summit between President Moon and Prime Minister Suga.⁶⁵ However, in the midst of negotiations, Soma Hirohisa, then-Japanese deputy chief of mission at the Japanese embassy in Seoul, suggested that Moon's bid to improve the bilateral relationship between South Korea and Japan amounted to "masturbation," and that "the government of Japan does not think about the Japan-Korea relationship as much as Korea does."⁶⁶ The comment—which had been made in an interview with a South Korean reporter, was quickly criticized by both then-Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Kato Katsunobu and Prime Minister Suga. However, the remark had by that point ignited a media firestorm, and the Moon administration dropped all negotiations concerning the summit, and Moon himself announced that he will not visit Tokyo for the Olympics.⁶⁷

Indeed, according to a Korean newspaper, while Moon's presidential advisers had formerly been evenly split on whether he should attend the Tokyo Olympics, the incident led to a consensus against the idea.⁶⁸

To some degree, the intense backlash towards the comment came as a result of the uncharacteristically lewd nature of the comment. As indicated earlier, East Asian communication tends to be far more indirect and implicit than is often observed in Western contexts, possibly suggesting that it was made in a moment of a lack of clarity. Certainly, Hirohisa should have been able to recognize the very likely negative consequences which would derive from an irresponsible comment made towards a South Korean reporter during a period in which both states were engaging in sensitive negotiations that could begin to swing their relationship in a more positive direction. The seeming recklessness of the Japanese official therefore indicated to some observers the more general failure of Japanese diplomacy when it came to repairing their relations with South Korea.⁶⁹

Following Nathan S. Park's argument regarding the incident, the remark was evidence that Japan was not, as they themselves asserted, engaging in a purely interest-based calculation, but rather a series of grievances that cut at the core of their national sense of pride—it brought to the forefront a highly sensitive, and therefore emotional, issue that policymakers felt demanded a strong response and for which they felt they could not make many concessions, lest they face criticism from their own peers and constituents. In fact, reflecting on the loss of trust—and by extension, the emotionally charged nature of the dispute—between the two countries, the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* would go as far as to call the Japanese policy the “extreme of stupidity.”⁷⁰

A reasonable criticism of the argument laid out above is that the reason why South Korea and Japan have remained so rigid in their policies is because of public opinion—specifically, by backing down, they would suffer audience costs as their citizens rail against the perceived weakness of their government. So, do these emotion-laden discourses actually suggest that emotions impacted FPDM as the trade war escalated in July and developed afterwards? It is impossible to determine with full confidence how impactful emotions truly were in dictating how policymakers reached their decisions. However, survey data in Korea and Japan suggest, at least, that public opinion cannot adequately explain either country's policy towards the other. In particular, it cannot explain

the longevity of those policies. A 2020 survey done jointly in South Korea and Japan by Genron NPO and East Asia Institute found that South Korean perceptions of Japan experienced a downward trend, while Japanese perceptions of South Korea experienced an upward trend; few supported their governments' policy towards the other country, and in South Korea, an increasing number of people wanted a new solution to the forced labor issue in particular.⁷¹ In another survey conducted in 2022, the joint survey found that in both countries, there were decreased threat perceptions, strong popular demands to improve the bilateral relationship, especially among the country's youth (ages 18–39), and support for greater cooperation within the US-South Korea-Japan security triangle.⁷² As such, the Korean and Japanese public cannot be said to be responsible for sustaining the dispute. Rather, the unwillingness of both states to deviate from their chosen policies despite losing public support demonstrates to some extent that leaders' perceptions and feelings have some sway over how they have responded to one another over the dispute.

Conclusion

This study is intended to serve two purposes: 1) to take on Karen E. Smith's call to begin a research regime on the real impact of emotions in foreign policy decision-making, and 2) to serve as a first cut into how emotions-based research can explain decision-making processes in South Korea and Japan. As discussed previously, a weakness of discourse analysis, and a limitation stemming from the inability to properly operationalize emotions, is that it relies on inferences derived from speech. Nonetheless, just as with data analysis, estimations pertaining to how individuals are feeling can be made with greater accuracy given higher volumes of speeches, remarks, press conferences, etc. to assess within their respective contexts.

It remains unclear to what degree precisely emotions may have shaped South Korean and Japanese policymaking processes, though it is undeniable that they influenced how the two states viewed the others' intentions and motivations as well as the viability of certain policy alternatives. From the very outset of the dispute, the implications of the trade dispute on problems related to historical memory restricted the number of policy options that policymakers believed were available to them. Undoubtedly, part of this was likely out of concern that a conciliatory policy could provoke large-scale domestic criticism. However, despite the

fact that public opinion in both countries towards the other began to shift in a more positive direction, and despite both populations' dissatisfaction regarding their government's policy towards the other country, neither government feels comfortable in taking the initiative to begin negotiations out of a belief that the other government will engage in bad faith.⁷³

By 2023, it is still difficult to predict how the trade dispute will evolve, although the longevity of the dispute in itself seems to indicate how delicately both countries must navigate the political environment to avoid instigating a harsh response from the other. What is known, however, is that the powerful emotional component that has become embedded within the dispute as a result of the dispute's origins—that is, historical problems that remain extremely sensitive—has been and remains a major obstacle to reaching a solution that satisfies both states.

As mentioned earlier, this study serves as a first cut into using emotions to explain the 2019 trade dispute between South Korea and Japan, and many questions remain which would shape how scholars understand conflict, interpret state behavior, and develop solutions. Just as the motivation for this study was a concentration of research in the European context, future research is needed to evaluate the impact of emotions in other regional contexts. More research is also needed to examine the differences in how leaders' emotions impact their decision-making in crises and in contexts such as the Korea-Japan trade dispute, which approached but did not meet the threshold to be classified as a crisis. Whether there exist differences in the degree to which emotions influence decision-making processes in conflicts between rival and non-rival states is a similarly important question. Furthermore, as this study focused on the executive branches of the South Korean and Japanese governments, it is unclear how emotions factor into the interactions between members of executive and legislative bodies. Additionally, this study does not address the possible role of "expected" emotions, whereby leaders express particular emotions publicly to satisfy popular demands while privately holding different attitudes.

To address these questions, discourse analysis and other interpretive methods offer only one type of approach—other methods offer unique windows that can offer useful insights into the decision-making process. For example, research designs incorporating interviews with decision-makers can provide a far more detailed picture of how leaders felt and thought in specific moments during a crisis which

may not be captured in official documents, press releases, letters, and other spoken messages delivered in official capacities. While interviews often suffer from interviewees being incentivized to engage in post-hoc justifications, this problem can be mitigated by comparing answers from different interviews and by evaluating them against the backdrop of official documents. Furthermore, to examine the relationship between foreign policy elites and the public, it may be useful to design a survey experiment to evaluate the difference between how citizens respond to crisis and non-crisis events with the responses of decision-makers. Of course, there are significant challenges in the study of emotions in foreign policy. Most significantly, there continue to be great disagreements over how to operationalize emotions, and whether it is even possible to quantify emotions. Nonetheless, the study of emotions in foreign policy represents a new and fascinating area of inquiry that scholars of international relations must pursue in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of foreign policy decision-making as well as conflict initiation, escalation, and resolution.

Notes

1 Brent E. Sasley, "Theorizing States' Emotions," *International Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (2011): 452–76, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23016718>; Jonathan Renshon, Julia J. Lee, and Dustin Tingley, "Emotions and the Micro-Foundations of Commitment Problems," *International Organization* 71, no. S1 (April 2017): S189–218, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818316000473>; Michelle Pace and Ali Bilgic, "Studying Emotions in Security and Diplomacy: Where We Are Now and Challenges Ahead," *Political Psychology* 40, no. 6 (2019): 1407–17, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12635>; Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker, "Theorizing Emotions in World Politics," *International Theory* 6 (October 9, 2014): 491–514, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971914000232>.

2 Simon Koschut, Todd H. Hall, Reinhard Wolf, Ty Solomon, Emma Hutchison, and Roland Bleiker. "Discourse and Emotions in International Relations." *International Studies Review* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2017): 481–508, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/vix033>.

3 Karen E. Smith "Emotions and EU Foreign Policy." *International Affairs* 97, no. 2 (March 8, 2021): 287–304. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaa218>.

4 David Houghton, *The Decision Point: Six Cases in U.S. Foreign Policy Decision Making*, Oxford University Press, 2012. <https://global.oup.com/ushe/product/the-decision-point-9780199743520?cc=kr&lang=en&>.

5 Smith, "Emotions and EU Foreign Policy," p. 291.

6 Young-jin Oh, "We Koreans Are Emotional and Rational," *The Korea Times*, August 9, 2019, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2023/05/667_273675.html.

7 "[Reporter's Notebook] Does Japan Want to Be a Country Swayed by Emotions?," Hankyoreh, June 16, 2021, https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/999647.html; Jaewon Kim, "South Korea Presidential Hopeful Shows Bitter Emotion toward Japan," *Nikkei Asia*, November 25, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/South-Korea-election/South-Korea-presidential-hopeful-shows-bitter-emotion-toward-Japan>.

8 Karl Gustafsson and Todd H Hall, "The Politics of Emotions in International Relations: Who Gets to Feel What, Whose Emotions Matter, and the 'History Problem' in Sino-Japanese Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (December 17, 2021): 973–84, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqab071>.

9 Michelle Pace and Ali Bilgic, "Trauma, Emotions, and Memory in World Politics: The Case of the European Union's Foreign Policy in the Middle East Conflict," *Political Psychology* 39, no. 3 (2018): 503–17, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12459>; Tuomas Forsberg, Regina Heller, and Reinhard Wolf, "Status and Emotions in Russian Foreign Policy," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 261–68, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.007>; Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Russia Says No: Power, Status, and Emotions in Foreign Policy," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47, no. 3–4 (October 16, 2014): 269–79, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.003>.

10 G. E. Marcus, "Emotions in Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. 1 (2000): 221–50, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.3.1.221>, pp. 223–25.

11 Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 5th ed. Basic Books, n.d., <https://www.basicbooks.com/titles/michael-walzer/just-and-unjust-wars/9780465052707/>.

12 Smith, "Emotions and EU Foreign Policy," p. 289.

- 13 Brent E. Sasley, "Theorizing States' Emotions," *International Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (2011), p. 453; Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?* Reprint, Mariner Books, 2017, p. 27, <http://www.kyobobook.co.kr/product/detailViewEng.laf?mallGb=ENG&ejkGb=ENG&barcode=9781328915382>.
- 14 Brent E. Sasley, "Theorizing States' Emotions," *International Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (2011), p. 461.
- 15 Henri Tajfel et al., "Social Categorization and Intergroup Behaviour," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 1, no. 2 (1971): 149, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420010202>.
- 16 For an example, see: Irving Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982.
- 17 Sasley, "Theorizing States' Emotions," p. 456.
- 18 For a study on the decision-making of a small group of high elites, such as the Executive Committee which John F. Kennedy assembled to navigate the Cuban Missile Crisis, see: Fursenko, Aleksandr, and Timothy Naftali. "One Hell of a Gamble": Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964: The Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997, pp. 179-83.
- 19 Sasley, "Theorizing States' Emotions," p. 456.
- 20 Robert L. Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, Columbia University Press, 1989; Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War*, Princeton University Press, 1992.
- 21 John Huer, "Psychology of Korean Han," *koreatimes*, March 22, 2009, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2021/12/272_41770.html.
- 22 For a reading on the impact of the export controls on Korean-Japan trade, see: Samuel Goodman, John VerWey, and Dan Kim, "The South Korea-Japan Trade Dispute in Context: Semiconductor Manufacturing, Chemicals, and Concentrated Supply Chains," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3470271>; "Japan Removes South Korea from Trusted Trade Partner List | DW | 02.08.2019," *DW.COM*, accessed December 8, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/japan-removes-south-korea-from-trusted-trade-partner-list/a-49858790>; "Japan Restricts Chip Smartphone Materials Exports to South Korea | DW | 01.07.2019," *DW.COM*, accessed December 8, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/japan-restricts-chip-smartphone-materials-exports-to-south-korea/a-49424209>.
- 23 Kwang Tae Kim, "(2nd LD) S. Korea to Remove Japan from Its 'Whitelisted' of Trusted Trading Partners," *Yonhap News Agency*, August 2, 2019, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20190802009652320>; Kyle Ferrier, "Abe Shinzo's Legacy in South Korea," *September 4, 2020*, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/09/abe-shinzos-legacy-in-south-korea/>.
- 24 "Update of METI's Licensing Policies and Procedures on Exports of Controlled Items to the Republic of.
- 25 "Abe Urges Seoul to Uphold 1965 Agreement over Wartime Compensation," *The Japan Times*, August 6, 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/08/06/national/abe-urges-seoul-uphold-1965-agreement-wartime-compensation/>.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korean Court Orders Mitsubishi of Japan to

Pay for Forced Wartime Labor,” *The New York Times*, November 29, 2018, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/29/world/asia/south-korea-wartime-compensation-japan.html>.

28 Keith Johnson, “Why Are Japan and South Korea at Each Other’s Throats?,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), July 15, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/07/15/why-are-japan-and-south-korea-in-a-trade-fight-moon-abe-chips-wwii/>; Choe Sang-Hun and Motoko Rich, “The \$89,000 Verdict Tearing Japan and South Korea Apart,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 2019, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/13/world/asia/south-korea-slave-forced-labor-japan-world-war-two.html>.

29 For a discussion of the “history problem”, see: Chris Deacon, “(Re)Producing the ‘History Problem’: Memory, Identity and the Japan-South Korea Trade Dispute,” *The Pacific Review* 0, no. 0 (March 10, 2021): 1–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2021.1897652>.

30 Takuya Matsuda and Jaehan Park, “Geopolitics Redux: Explaining the Japan-Korea Dispute and Its Implications for Great Power Competition,” *War on the Rocks*, November 7, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/geopolitics-redux-explaining-the-japan-korea-dispute-and-its-implications-for-great-power-competition/>.

31 Lauren Richardson, “Japan’s Deepening Diplomatic Crisis with South Korea,” *East Asia Forum*, September 15, 2019, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/09/15/japans-deepening-diplomatic-crisis-with-south-korea/>.

32 *Ibid.*; Jong-un Kim, “Kim Jong Un’s 2018 New Year’s Address,” (speech) *NCNK*, January 1, 2018, <https://www.ncnk.org/node/1427>.

33 Henry Storey, “History Haunts Japan–South Korea Ties,” *Lowy Institute*, February 4, 2021, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/history-haunts-japan-south-korea-ties>.

34 Wrenn Yennie Lindgren et al., “The Identity Politics Driving the Japan–South Korea Trade War,” *East Asia Forum*, November 25, 2019, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/11/25/the-identity-politics-driving-the-japan-south-korea-trade-war/>.

35 Chris Deacon, “(Re)Producing the ‘History Problem’: Memory, Identity and the Japan-South Korea Trade Dispute,” *The Pacific Review* 0, no. 0 (March 10, 2021): p. 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2021.1897652>.

36 S. Nathan Park, “Japan Wasted a Golden Chance for Olympic Reconciliation,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), July 29, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/29/japan-olympics-korea-relations/>.

37 Deacon, “(Re)Producing the ‘History Problem’,” p. 1. ; Park, “Japan Wasted a Golden Chance for Olympic Reconciliation”.

38 Todd Hall, *Emotional diplomacy: official emotion on the international stage* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 2-3.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Lindgren et al., “The Identity Politics Driving the Japan–South Korea Trade War”.

41 Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, “Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (September 2000): 224–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2695870>; Daan Scheepers and Naomi Ellemers, “Social Identity Theory,” in

Social Psychology in Action: Evidence-Based Interventions from Theory to Practice, ed. Kai Sassenberg and Michael L.W. Vliek (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 129, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13788-5_9; Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker, "Theorizing Emotions in World Politics," *International Theory* 6 (October 9, 2014): 491–514, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971914000232>.

42 Tajfel, "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour," p. 65–93.

43 Ibid.

44 Sasley, "Theorizing States' Emotions," p. 461.

45 Joseph Yi and Wondong Lee, "Pandemic Nationalism in South Korea," *Society* 57, no. 4 (August 1, 2020): 446–51, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-020-00509-z>; Henry Storey, "History Haunts Japan–South Korea Ties," Lowy Institute, February 4, 2021, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/history-haunts-japan-south-korea-ties>; one of my publications, currently under review for presentation at Johns Hopkins University's The Richard Macksey National Undergraduate Humanities Research Symposium, compared contemporary Japanese nationalism, in particular the role of Shinzo Abe and the LDP, with postwar Japanese social identity.

46 For an analysis of nationalism as a nonrational phenomenon, see: Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism* (Princeton University Press, 1993), <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691025636/ethnonationalism>.

47 Taro Kono, "Regarding the Decision by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Korea, Confirming the Existing Judgments on the Japanese Company," press release, October 30, 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002204.html.

48 Vijay Padmanabhan, "Norm Internationalization through Trials for Violations of International Law: Four Conditions for Success and Their Application to Trials of Detainees at Guantanamo Bay," *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law* 31, no. 2 (January 1, 2009): 435.

49 Taro Kono, "Extraordinary Press Conference by Foreign Minister Taro Kono," press conference, January 4, 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/kaiken/kaiken4e_000593.html.

50 Ibid.

51 David De Cremer and Kees van den Bos, "Justice and Feelings: Toward a New Era in Justice Research," *Social Justice Research* 20, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-007-0031-2>; Robert C. Solomon, "The Emotions of Justice," *Social Justice Research* 3, no. 4 (December 1, 1989): 345–74, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01048082>.

52 Youkyung Lee, "South Korea Lawmaker Seeks Imperial Apology for Japan Sex Slaves - Bloomberg," Bloomberg, February 8, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-08/south-korea-lawmaker-seeks-imperial-apology-for-japan-sex-slaves>; Kono, "Press Conference by Foreign Minister Taro Kono".

53 Kono, "Extraordinary Press Conference by Foreign Minister Taro Kono".

54 Yong S. Park and Bryan S. K. Kim, "Asian and European American Cultural Values and Communication Styles among Asian American and European American College Students," *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology* 14, no. 1 (January 2008): 53–55, <https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.14.1.47>; Jan Servaes, "Reflections on the Differ-

ences in Asian and European Values and Communication Modes,” *Asian Journal of Communication* 10, no. 2 (January 1, 2000): 61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292980009364784>.

55 Kono, “Press Conference by Foreign Minister Taro Kono”.

56 Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, “Update of METI’s Licensing Policies and Procedures on Exports of Controlled Items to the Republic of Korea,” news release, July 1, 2019, https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2019/0701_001.html.

57 Jae-in Moon, “Opening Remarks by President Moon Jae-in at Meeting with His Senior Secretaries,” *Cheong Wa Dae*, July 15, 2019, <http://english1.president.go.kr/BriefingSpeeches/Speeches/624>.

58 Jonathan Mercer, “Rationality and Psychology in International Politics,” *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 95-97, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818305050058>; Michal Natorksi and Karolina Pomorska, “Trust and Decision-Making in Times of Crisis: The EU’s Response to the Events in Ukraine,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 55, no. 1 (2017): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12445>.

59 Moon, “Opening Remarks by President Moon Jae-in at Meeting with His Senior Secretaries”.

60 Jae-in Moon, “Opening Remarks by President Moon Jae-in at Emergency Cabinet Meeting,” *Cheong Wa Dae*, August 2, 2019, <http://english1.president.go.kr/BriefingSpeeches/Speeches/630>.

61 *Ibid.*

62 Tong-Hyung Kim, “South Korea Downgrades Japan Trade Status as Dispute Deepens,” September 18, 2019, <https://sg.finance.yahoo.com/news/south-korea-downgrades-japan-trade-015704535.html>.

63 Yun-Mo Sung, “Minister Sung’s Statement on Japan’s Export Controls against the ROK,” press release, July 2, 2019, http://english.motie.go.kr/en/pc/pressreleases/bbs/bbsView.do?bbs_seq_n=729&bbs_cd_n=2¤tPage=9&search_key_n=&search_val_v=&cate_n=

64 *Ibid.*; Taro Kono, “Extraordinary Press Conference by Foreign Minister Taro Kono,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, August 22, 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/kaiken/kaiken4e_000683.html.

65 Mitch Shin, “President Moon Decides Against Olympic Visit to Japan.” *The Diplomat*, July 20, 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/07/president-moon-decides-against-olympic-visit-to-japan/>.

66 *Ibid.*; S. Nathan Park, “Japan Wasted a Golden Chance for Olympic Reconciliation.” *Foreign Policy* (blog), July 29, 2021. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/29/japan-olympics-korea-relations/>.

67 *Ibid.*

68 www.donga.com. “‘안됩니다’ 방일 만류한 참모들…文대통령은 ‘아쉽다’ 되뇌어,” July 19, 2021. <https://www.donga.com/news/Politics/article/all/20210719/108041115/1>.

69 Park, “Japan Wasted a Golden Chance for Olympic Reconciliation”.

70 *Asahi Shimbun*, “(社説余滴) 3年目の「愚策の極み」 箱田哲也:朝日新

聞デジタル,” July 4, 2021. https://www.asahi.com/articles/DA3S14961375.html?iref=ogimage_rek.

71 “[The 8th Joint Korea-Japan Public Opinion Poll] Analysis Report on Comparative Data.” East Asia Institute, October 22, 2020. http://www.eai.or.kr/new/en/project/view.asp?code=104&intSeq=20175&board=eng_reports&keyword_option=&keyword=&more=; beginning in 2013, the Genron NPO, a Japanese think tank, began polling in both Korea and Japan to assess both populations’ perceptions vis-à-vis the other; in 2015 the Genron NPO began carrying out this project in conjunction with the East Asia Institute, a South Korean think tank.

72 “[EAI · Genron NPO Joint Press Conference] The 10th Survey on Mutual Perceptions of South Korea and Japan (September 1, 2022).” East Asia Institute, September 1, 2022. http://www.eai.or.kr/new/en/project/view.asp?code=104&intSeq=21399&board=eng_event&keyword_option=&keyword=&more=.

73 For polling data on South Korean and Japanese views towards each other, the Japan-based think tank Genron NPO and South Korea-based think tank East Asia Institute has conducted a series of comparative polls in South Korea and Japan. For example, see: http://www.eai.or.kr/new/en/project/view.asp?code=104&intSeq=20175&board=eng_reports&keyword_option=&keyword=&more=; The Japan Times. “Japanese and South Koreans See Each Other More Favorably, Poll Shows,” September 2, 2022. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/09/02/national/south-korea-japan-relations-survey/>.