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Publication date

01-04-2021

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Document Version

Published version

Citation for this work (American Psychological Association 7th edition)

Faraoun, A. (2021). *Mimetic desire and resentment in the case of the Japan–South Korea trade dispute* (Version 1). University of Sussex. <https://hdl.handle.net/10779/uos.23484992.v1>

Published in

European Journal of Korean Studies

Link to external publisher version

<https://doi.org/10.33526/EJKS.20212002.251>

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INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mimetic Desire and *Ressentiment*
in the Case of the Japan–South Korea
Trade Dispute¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide an explanatory account of the role of emotions in the trade dispute between Japan and South Korea which started in July 2019. Building on an integrated approach to the study of emotions in international relations, it argues that the collective experience of emotions in situations of conflict has to be understood in relation to the moralities assumed by the parties involved. It proposes a theoretical framework combining the concepts of mimetic desire and *ressentiment* coined by René Girard and Friedrich Nietzsche, respectively, in order to problematize the dialectic of power-justice underlying the processes of legitimation and self-justification by the two countries. In this sense, the strong emotional reactivity between both elites and people in South Korea and Japan can be attributed to the contradictions between the desires for superiority and equality channelled by nation-state-centred narratives. It concludes that ending the cycle of emotional reactivity requires both parties to move toward commitments to justice and empathy at the domestic and international levels.

Keywords: Mimetic Desire, Ressentiment, IR, South Korean Trade Disputes, Emotion in IR

Introduction

In July 2019, the Japanese government announced its decision to impose restrictions on the export of semiconductor materials by ending South Korea's special status as a trade partner. Since then, the two countries' bilateral relations have considerably deteriorated, and remain charged with a degree of hostility and distrust. This situation does not only involve official inter-state relations, but also the citizens of both countries. As a form of popular retaliation, many Koreans decided to boycott Japanese products and refrain from travelling to Japan, to which Japanese people responded with a mix of surprise and incomprehension.² One year after the conflict started, 72% of Koreans were still participating in the boycott movement.³ The strong and lasting reaction from the Korean side can be imputed, on the one hand, to the damaging effects that the decision is believed to have on the Korean economy, and on the other hand to the different views assumed by each party regarding the motives behind the decision. The two countries' colonial history has left a vivid and painful memory, which taints the relations between Japan and South Korea, and this memory is conspicuously linked to the present conflict. This paper argues that it is necessary to look further into how and why it has persisted for such a long time, and why it continues to arise in issues that do not seem directly related, in this case Japan's decision to end a mutually profitable agreement on trade relations based on alleged security concerns. Therefore, the main question that this paper attempts to address is the following: How can we explain the tensions between the two countries in the context of the trade dispute by looking beyond the factors that are immediately visible and the claims made by both parties?

By addressing this question, this paper seeks to contribute to the research agenda put forward by Korean IR scholars, mainly Eun Yong-soo⁴ and Min Byoung-won,⁵ for a non-Western approach to International Relations (IR). As a challenge to mainstream IR, this agenda proposes theoretical and epistemological innovations while at the same time avoiding the traps of parochialism and essentialism. Rather than a rejection of Western scholarship, it is thus a critique of its Eurocentric attributes and an attempt to build "interim" theoretical and analytical solutions to reconcile Western and non-Western perspectives.⁶ This can be done by promoting pluralism within the discipline: rather than creating different disciplinary cores which IR borrows from while keeping their insights on the margins of its mainstream scholarship, there is a need to bring what has been kept on the margins into the core of the discipline. An example of the latter is the lack of engagement with new psychological approaches which, as Eun (2013) remarked,⁷ have gained in depth and can significantly enrich the study of international politics

if taken more seriously. Accordingly, this paper focuses on a particular area in psychological approaches: that of emotion studies, which is used to shed light on Japan–South Korea relations while keeping a balance between cultural particularity and universal aspects of social organization and inter-group relations.

This requires, on the one hand, a conceptualization of emotions at the collective level, and on the other hand a problematization of their role in political behavior. With regards to the former, this paper builds from recent work by IR scholars who have integrated such dichotomies as reason/emotion, physiology/cognition, and micro/macro-level. It further suggests that the conceptualization of emotion should take into account the moral grounds of the behavioral choices made by the agents involved in those relations. The latter task will be approached using the contributions of René Girard and Friedrich Nietzsche to moral philosophy, namely mimetic desire and *ressentiment*, as hermeneutic tools for the understanding and interpretation of emotions at the collective level. Based on this framing, the key argument of this paper is that the rising tensions that characterized the political as well as wider social response to the Japanese government's decision can be explained by an unresolved duality of desires: that of the elites for power and that of the grassroots for justice. However, it also highlights that these two objects of desire may work in opposite directions due to a deeply seated *ressentiment* in South Korean society, delaying the resolution of the fundamental moral conflict with Japan and obstructing emotional reconciliation.

The rest of this paper is divided into four main sections. Section two provides a selective review of the literature on emotion studies in IR and proposes a theoretical framework that accounts for the moral values underlying emotions. Section three clarifies the methodological approach used in this paper and delineates the latter's scope and limitations. Section four undertakes an empirical application of the proposed conceptual framework through a case study of the trade dispute between South Korea and Japan. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the paper's aims and argument.

Towards a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Emotions in IR

The ancient dichotomy between the rational/enlightened and irrational/primitive human being⁸ has long remained at the heart of what we know today as the realist school in international relations. While research undertaken by realists does not exclude emotions from its scientific purview, its theorization of human behavior tends to be heavily influenced by the theory of rational choice. As Freyberg-Inan (2003) pointed out,⁹ the rational choice framework reduces behavioral motivation

to the pursuit of power, premised upon a calculative human nature, and driven by constant cost-benefit analysis of interests. Interference of emotions in this process is considered to have destructive effects and, consequently, they remain subordinate and detrimental to the primary power-interest nexus. However, in doing so, realists defeat their very “objectivist” and “realistic” aspirations. Developments in psychology and neuroscience have demonstrated that, as far as the empirically observable indicators of human decision-making at the neurobiological level are concerned, emotion is not only indissociable, but also *indispensable* to rational thinking.¹⁰ In the words of Damasio, what were previously considered as the “lowly orders of our organism are in the loop of high reason.”¹¹

Encouraged by this scientific turn, alternatives to the traditional treatment of emotions in politics have been put forward. Research by constructivists shows the importance of collectively shared memory, identity and experience,¹² trauma¹³ and humiliation¹⁴ in explaining the emotional dimension of international politics in a range of different contexts. Some of the alternatives also emerged from the neo-realist school itself: by engaging with the concepts of identity and shared values and beliefs borrowed from social psychology and constructivism, they explored the role of collective phenomena such as national loyalty, identity-based conflict between states, and emotional display in the conduct of diplomacy in explaining political behavior.¹⁵ However, their innovations are meant to better defend their basic argument of the self-interested actor. The world is still a competitive and power-driven arena, but one where rational actors need to navigate a complex set of symbolic and emotional parameters, in order to better protect their interests. As Lebow (2005) argued,¹⁶ this is an ontological assumption that is shared by “thin” constructivists.

On the other hand, “thick” constructivists’ ontology has been criticized for its rejection of a notion of human nature and any fixed or essential characteristics of experience and behavior. Yet in this ontology where emotions, identity, and other attributes are purely semiotic and arise in an inter-subjective fashion, it becomes difficult to coherently link materiality and meaning (Ringmar 2016).¹⁷ Additionally, while this constructivism has taken important steps toward disproving erroneous beliefs held by classical philosophers, its avoidance of defining human nature obstructs the study of international politics as praxis, that is to say, its value for the conduct of politics rather than simply as a tool for explanation and prediction. In this respect, it is useful to look at the scholarship that adds depth to constructivist insights on emotion with a focus on its intersection with moral and ethical dimensions. For instance, Hutchison and Bleiker (2008) emphasized how feelings of injustice can impede reconciliation in post-conflict societies, arguing that positive emotions of empathy and compassion

are more likely to lead to constructive outcomes.¹⁸ Bilewicz (2016) found that “historical defensiveness,” a strategy through which perpetrators deny responsibility for the wrong done by “downregulating” or containing moral emotions of guilt and shame, constitutes a key factor in situations of failed post-conflict reconciliation.¹⁹ Jeffery (2011) combined the notion of “moral sentiment” with recent findings in psychology and neuroscience to make a compelling suggestion: given that cognitive processes of moral deliberation are inclusive of emotions, we have to understand the rational analysis of real “facts” as an effort to assess the *constraints* to our moral behavior, and not as the justification for considering them as fixed knowledge of the world on which to build our morality.²⁰ From her perspective, “in order to be meaningful, ‘oughts’ must reflect actions that can, in fact, be enacted. A moral principle that requires individuals to do something that is functionally impossible for human beings to perform is effectively meaningless.”²¹ This argument is important to the theorization of emotion in a manner that takes into consideration both the universal conditions of its functioning, which are embedded in the lived reality of human societies, and the particular aspects of its meaning and role in historically constituted social relations.

Following from the above, the main challenge for contenders to the mainstream treatment of emotions in international politics has been to offer a convincing ontological account of emotions at both personal and collective levels of analysis. On the other hand, there is also a need to theorize the role of emotions without disregarding the moral dimension of politics. These challenges can be addressed through an integrated approach to the task of defining emotion through a set of basic assumptions that can be universalized, while leaving space for contingent and particularistic social and historical formations.

Conceptualizing Emotions

Due to rising conviction that emotions play an important role in world politics,²² some proposals for an integrated approach have been put forward.²³ While Hutchison and Bleiker (2014) called for combining insights from micro and macro-level approaches to theorize “social emotions,” others have suggested specific concepts to understand how the latter are formed.²⁴ Mercer (2014) suggested that, insofar as emotions are as much cultural as neurobiological phenomena, it is through individuals’ identification with common cultural norms and values that emotions become “contagious” within a group, and lead to a common reaction to certain events.²⁵ It is in this capacity that a state, although it is not an embodied entity, can “experience” emotion: through the in-group identifications that are always emergent rather than reified and fixed. In the same vein, Crawford (2014)

saw the contagion process as one of institutionalization, whereby emotional categories are derived from the dominant knowledge frames in a group and become part of “chains of belief, action, and response, [which] may confirm or heighten initial emotional reactions.”²⁶ In this sense, she stresses the importance of power in the functioning of social emotions. Fierke (2014) added the dimension of intentions and their link to the emergence of emotions within and in-between groups.²⁷ Emotional experiences in response to certain public actions may depend on how they were communicated through the media, and the intentions to which those actions were attributed. Ling (2014) stressed the vital role of linguistic codifications of culture in shaping the connotative meanings of emotions, such as the divisions between “winners” and “losers” or “masculine” and “feminine” figures, to which particular emotions are associated.²⁸

Recognizing the value of these contributions to emotions studies in IR, Eun (2018) put together a comprehensive proposal which unifies these insights into a theory of collective emotions at the national level.²⁹ It holds that collective emotions are made possible through the same processes as collective identification. The collective experience of emotions is reinforced by the existence of another group deemed exogenous, and whose identity is different. The sharper this difference is, the more likely is the indigenous group to create what he called a “superior identity” (우위 정체성) tied to its national narrative. The proposal can be summarized as follows:

1. The more internally coherent and strong this superior identity is in terms of adherence to its narratives and symbols, the likelier it is that a collective emotion corresponding to it will arise.
2. The presence of an external “other” whose narratives and symbols contradict or belittle the “native” superior identity makes it likelier for emotions like anger and hate toward that other to arise.
3. If the master identity of the other is different from the native’s master identity, it is likelier that negative emotions will arise.
4. The collective emotions corresponding to the superior identity of a group are made experientially “perceptible” to the majority of its members through the mass media. This communicative process is more likely to be successful if it is triggered by an actor termed “collective emotions entrepreneur” (집단감정 주창자) who diffuses emotions and may at the same time instrumentalize them.

However, this proposal does not explicitly address the collective memory of a group and the dimension of moral conflict. Building on this framework, the rest

of this paper will focus on how to account for the moral conflict between the desire for power and the desire for justice, and how they shape the normative basis for the collective emotions of a “superior identity.” To do this, I contend that there are two additional theoretical advances to be made. First, there is a need to ground the notion of morality in a definition of the human. This is not meant to essentialize it; rather, to put it in terms of Crawford’s (2009) argument, it is to fully accept the complexity of human nature and its irreducibility to one or a few characteristics.³⁰ Then, this definition is seen through the lens of the relational specificities of the emotional category of “*ressentiment*.”

Mimetic Desire as the Basis of Human Nature: Linking Morality and Emotion

In his “Definition of Man,” Burke (1966) distinguished human beings from animals through their linguistic ability, but for him the importance of this ability resides in the invention of “hortatory” speech: the language of right and wrong or morality, the very basis of social and political life.³¹ Yet when it comes to determining the source of morality and its organizing principles, one is at a loss for a fixed answer, which is why early philosophers approached this problem by adopting a stance on human nature. For instance, Hobbes and Rousseau appear to have radically different conceptions on human nature, but they both started from the assumption that all motivation of human social behavior is primarily influenced by that which they desire. For Hobbes (2002), humans act out of fear of death, desire for life, and hope to obtain the object of their desire.³² Their “passions” are “diversely called from the opinion men have of the likelihood of attaining what they desire,”³³ and therefore their perceptions of things are shaped by the relationship between the thing and the achievement of one’s desires. In this sense, what is good or moral is what is desirable, and what is evil or immoral is the undesirable. Rousseau (1889) took one step further by arguing that one must recognize which desires “spring from nature itself, and which of them from opinion,”³⁴ emphasizing that the distinction between inborn and acquired desires is vital for human education or, in other words, for enabling ethical life. He thought that desires come either from a natural order independent of human judgment or a human system of valuation generated within a society. For Girard, it is this idea that desires are socially “acquired” that constitutes the core of human attitudes and behavior in mimetic theory. Mimesis is the process through which human desires are mediated, enabling humans to construct their conception of what they want:

Humankind is that creature who lost a part of its animal instinct in order to gain access to 'desire,' as it is called. Once their natural needs are satisfied, humans desire intensely, but they don't know exactly what they desire, for no instinct guides them. We do not have our own desire, one really our own. The essence of desire is to have no essential goal. Truly to desire, we must have recourse to people about us; we have to borrow their desire.

This borrowing occurs quite often without either the loaner or the borrower being aware of it. It is not only desire that one borrows from those whom one takes for models; it is a mass of behaviors, attitudes, things learned, prejudices, preferences, etc.³⁵

Girard is in this sense extending his explanatory endeavor beyond the starting point taken by Burke,³⁶ reaching the initial stage in the formation of a subjective experience through social interaction, which precedes the development of any moral judgment. The notion of "good" then acquires its meaning through the reference frame of desirability, and the latter is constructed through mimesis. Although many scholars have proposed an explanation of human behavior through mimetic interaction with an "other" (e.g., Taussig 1993; Bhabha 1984; Benjamin 1996; Horkheimer and Adorno 2002; Albers 2008) understood as an individual or a group,³⁷ Girard's theory is distinctive due to its consideration of desire itself as the object of mimicry, rather than the visible behavioral effects ensuing from the pursuit thereof.

This process of acquiring desires is initially a mirroring of the other's desires that can be called "pre-rational" and "pre-cognitive,"³⁸ in which case a subject's idea of the desirable emerges *while* striving to obtain the same object, eventually engaging in what Girard calls mimetic rivalry. The latter is characterized by reciprocity and escalating tension, reinforced as "the appearance of a rival seems to validate the desire, the immense value of the object desired. [...] In imitating my rival's desires I give him the impression that he has good reasons to desire what he desires, to possess what he possesses, and so the intensity of his desire keeps increasing."³⁹ Thus it is through the process of imitation and competition that a moral rationality legitimating the desire is developed by the parties involved, and this morality of mimetic rivalry may in turn lead to conflict and violence.

Considering the applicability of mimetic desire and rivalry to colonialism reveals aspects that fulfil the theoretical assumptions above. Taking the example of European colonialism, the colonial mentality of nineteenth-century Europe can be seen as induced by the emergence of mimetic desire between nations competing for the same objects of desire, namely: territory, resources, and manpower. The widespread thesis that capitalism and the drive for wealth accumulation was the initial trigger for colonial and imperial projects⁴⁰ would view these as necessities emerging out of a changing mode of production, and therefore as objects

of economic utility contributing to the maintenance of social life, which is itself reducible to the biological needs of individuals. Girard's mimetic theory would view utility as the effect of colonialism rather than its impetus, the latter being the desire shared between European nations to possess what their rivals possessed.

Yet the mimetic rivalry is transferred to the dominated subject as well, which eventually leads to the validation of all the prejudices underpinning the relational dichotomy of "master-slave" invented in the course of legitimating colonial projects, precisely when the colonized adjust their desires to those of the colonizer. When the colonized desire what their colonizers possess, they strive for liberation and independence through "nationalism," the creation of an identity that appropriates the ethno-centric discourse of the colonizer and its associated notion of sovereignty and metrics of socio-economic progress. However, this process is not an exact reproduction of behavior by the subject performing the mimesis, but involves creativity:

Mimesis is no longer simply a mirror in which the Self confronts the Other, nor a process for the appropriation of the power of the Other, but a process by which social and cultural features of the Other are internalised in a negotiation of the confrontation between two cultures, a process which ultimately empowers the borrowing culture, allowing it, paradoxically, while changing, to nevertheless remain 'traditional.'⁴¹

By appropriating the desires of the colonial other, the colonized subject also borrows the latter's mechanisms of fulfilment of the acquired desire, but the rationale behind this is found in the subject's system of moral reference, which will portray the same object in a different light and create different justifications for its desirability. For instance, nationalist movements resist colonialism and claim the right to build an independent society, while using the colonizer's territorial, administrative, political, and ideological legacy to do so. This is present in the dualisms of Enlightenment thought: although it established the narrative of progress underpinning the civilizing mission of colonialism, it was also the source of claims to human freedom and equality that produced narratives of liberation.⁴² Mimetic desire thus fulfils the function of anti-colonialism and resistance and subsequently the achievement of independence, becoming in a sense a strategy. Another example is that of theories of development adopted by colonies and which carry out the desire for reaching equal status with their former colonizers. As Kim Du-jin (2019) observed, capitalist-driven modernization has often carried a story of linear progress originating from the West (in the case of Korea acquired through the intermediary of Japan) and adopted as part of a "colonial modernity."⁴³ This point of view has greatly influenced state policies aiming at "catching up" with the more "developed" capitalist countries. Eventually, this line of thinking aims to

justify the attempt to become *like* the colonial other. As Walker (2005) wondered, “does not subversion through mimesis owe something to the magical properties of copies of the Other? Might a copy, through ‘contagion,’ acquire the power of the Other?”⁴⁴ But this strategy is inseparable from the moral dichotomy corresponding to the master-slave relationship, the effects of which survive in collective memory. It is precisely this dichotomy, as well as the attitudes and emotions that result from it, which will be discussed below through Nietzsche’s concept of *ressentiment*.

Conceptualizing Ressentiment: Desire, Power, and (In)justice

Ressentiment was understood by Nietzsche as an emotion forming out of a master-slave relationship and arising from the moral position adopted by the “slave” either in a literal or figurative sense. The latter condemns as Evil what Nietzsche depicts as natural strength and dominance. Out of desire to compensate for his own vulnerability, the slave takes on the role of the victim and constantly struggles to obtain justice. Nietzsche explains this through the historical example of the opposition between Rome and Judea, arguing that the Judeo-Christian tradition, which praises the intrinsic virtue of the weak, the victimized and the exploited, lives in expectation of the great triumph of justice with the coming of the Lord’s kingdom, symbolizing the reversal of positions whereby they would become the “masters.” For Nietzsche, “priests make the most *evil enemies* [...] because they are the most powerless. Out of this powerlessness, their hate swells into something huge and uncanny to a most intellectual and poisonous level.”⁴⁵ By extension, *ressentiment* is the perception of a suffered wrong, a wounded identity, indignation about the acts perpetrated by the other that prevent access to the resources for equal and prosperous life; an “affectively charged desire for revenge that arises in response to a perceived injury.”⁴⁶ In the context of colonialism, one may argue that it is violence and dispossession that cause the most rancorous sentiments against the oppressor, but neither of the two is an exclusive feature of colonialism and they are far from being absent in colonized societies prior to the intervention of an external power. *Ressentiment* in colonial relations can be understood as the continuation of mimetic desire: the feeling of injustice is triggered by the inability to obtain the object of desire coveted both by the self and the other.

The Korean concept of *han* 恨 (恨) is very similar to that of *ressentiment*, and is commonly invoked by scholars, artists, and critics to explain the feelings of resentment that have formed out of Korea’s experience of colonialism. It “encapsulates how collective trauma and individual hardship can create a complex feedback loop within the social imaginary.”⁴⁷ If *han* contains the explanatory

elements for the Korean experience, then one might wonder why a concept from Western philosophy is used. The answer resides in the purposes of critical inquiry, which is to advance a framework that has explanatory usefulness beyond parochialism and essentialism. In other words, a concept needs to have a certain degree of universal applicability in its most basic formulation and to be non-reducible solely to the interests and attributes of a particular human group. In this respect, *ressentiment* as an emotional category with a wide range of possible applications allows one to avoid the trap of cultural essentialism. *Han* is often presented as an exclusive emotion that cannot be fully comprehended by individuals outside the Korean ethnic community. If one assumes that *han* is more suitable to explain the pattern of reactivity that South Koreans have demonstrated in their relations with Japan, because it corresponds to their unique cultural traits, then there is a significant risk of reproducing the exclusionary and subordinating practices of Eurocentrism. As Murray (2020) observed, “adding ethnicized or culturalist representations of non-Western traits will never deliver a global or post-imperial IR,” and this is because “a fuller and more complex picture of humanity is denied in favor of stereotypes.”⁴⁸ Emotions are an inherent aspect of human relations, and as this paper contends, they are intrinsically linked to the human sense of morality and how individuals and groups act upon it. For instance, Lind’s (2008; 2011) work on the role of apologies in post-conflict regions revealed a correlation between the way in which politics of remembrance were conducted by aggressors and threat perception from the victims.⁴⁹ Unapologetic remembrance of past wrongs breeds mistrust and tensions, and conservative backlash after an apology can undermine previous efforts of reconciliation. It is clear that all “countries observe each other’s remembrance and regard denials as a signal of hostile intentions.”⁵⁰ Similarly, even though the present study is limited to the case of Japan–South Korea relations, its aim is to enable plausible claims to be made about the conduct of international politics more generally, based on assumptions about human relations.

Consequently, it is important to avoid alienating the study of international relations in non-Western regions, in this case East Asia, from the purposes of social science, and at the same time to overcome the functional limitation of *han*. Whereas the literature defines it as an emotive concept that directly represents the pain, injustice, and sorrow collectively felt by the Korean people (Lim 2019), its primary function appears to be that of giving hope and not of inducing calculated, reactive actions in the name of justice.⁵¹ Nietzsche’s version allows the analyst to go beyond these limitations, especially, as argued in this paper, if seen as compatible with the concept of mimetic desire, which applies to humans in general and not a particular ethnic group. In this sense, as rivalry emerges between two

subjects in a non-equal relationship as is typical of a colonial relationship, *ressentiment* evolves in tandem with a morality of virtuous resistance for the sake of the good and the achievement of retributive justice, enabled by a persistent and calculative behavior. This behavior aims for the “revaluation of the values of the dominated,”⁵² and the wound and suffering caused by perceived injustice is never completely healed unless the dominated party is able to completely reverse the roles of master–slave or predator–victim. When the power asymmetries fail to be addressed, the victimized ends up “hitting upon a new evaluative framework that allows him to remove his pain or discomfort by making possible either self-affirmation or mental mastery over the external source of pain.”⁵³

Although Nietzsche’s moral philosophy claims to be a critique of morality itself, it is clear from his *Genealogy of Morality* that he is not taking a neutral, value-free stance. For him, the “slaves” corrupt the moral dichotomy of good and bad: here, the “bad” is what the noble “masters” think of those of lower rank, who are naturally inferior, because of their inability to assert themselves. This corruption reverses the perspective and substitutes “evil” for “bad,” making the evil other a target of hatred, and Nietzsche is keen to express his disapproval of this process. Reactive attitudes and emotions are condemned, denying the victim a mechanism of retaliation. Portraying the slaves’ reactivity as laden with falsity and bias, he contends that: “the active, aggressive, over-reaching man is still a hundred paces nearer to justice than the man who reacts; he simply does not need to place a false and prejudiced interpretation on the object of his attention, like the man who reacts does.”⁵⁴ However, in mimetic theory emotion arises from the process of desiring, and desire itself is acquired through confrontation with another and intensified through the “reactivity” of rivalry. In the context of colonial aggression, the political identity formed by a (formerly) colonized subject upon independence, during the phase that one may refer to as “post-colonialism,” is an inter-subjective or collective reality created through the emotional reaction to the injustice caused by the other. This process consists of “performing identities through appropriation of colonial Otherness.”⁵⁵ Post-colonial nations therefore may engage in a political strategy that denounces the colonial other as responsible for the lack of status, privilege, or resources necessary to their desired national outcomes, while remaining bound by the contemporary framework of international law. *Ressentiment* is also expressed through the affordances of the international system, and former colonial powers can also use these to resist the process of moral subversion.

Methodology

This paper is grounded in the epistemological claim that it is possible to demonstrate the underlying psycho-emotional patterns through observation and description of their symbolic manifestation in the form of language and action.⁵⁶ This is a primarily interpretive work that recognizes the fluid and dynamic character of meaning and the impossibility of capturing a stable truth about social reality.⁵⁷ Therefore, its attribution of moral values and emotions to agents whose cognitive and affective states cannot be accessed directly is incompatible with positivist measures of validity and replicability. Positivists would criticize the attempt to establish a link between philosophical concepts and the manifestation of psychological phenomena without setting verifiable standards of measurement. However, within the hermeneutic epistemology that underpins this research, interpretation cannot be separated from the subjective point of view of the knower and his or her mental categories.⁵⁸ In accordance with these assumptions, to demonstrate the applicability of mimetic desire to this case study, contextualization is used to find indications of desire by one of the parties involved to reproduce the political ambitions and policy approaches of the other, by tracing the two countries' shared history and its relevance to the present case study.

To analyze *ressentiment*, emotions are treated as “reaction patterns” inferable from their meaningful effects.⁵⁹ An analytical procedure can be built on Koschut's (2018) proposal of “emotion discourse analysis” (EDA), which can be executed in three steps.⁶⁰ First, the researcher undertakes a selection of “canonical” texts issued by “charismatic authorities” at “foundational or transformative moments or crises,”⁶¹ although it must be acknowledged that they cannot represent the whole group or population from which they were extracted. Second, the textual material is mapped according to its micro and macro-level semantic elements and the emotional meaning they encode. Third, the interpretation is undertaken according to the “emotionalizing effect” or the emotional categories that are diffused at the social and political level, and the extent to which these are confirmed or contested. Correspondingly, the text which will be analysed in this study is President Moon Jae-in's address delivered at the Emergency Meeting held on 2 August 2019. This speech is considered as the most relevant primary source for the purposes of this paper, as it is the most clearly articulated reaction to the Japanese government's decision to remove South Korea from its list of most trusted trade partners. As a figure of authority, Moon represents a collective emotions entrepreneur, and his speech was reproduced and cited through all types of media. The text will be analyzed in terms of how it demonstrates the presence of *ressentiment*. This can be done by looking for the verbal indicators of this emotion in accordance with

its description by Nietzsche. Thematic analysis is used to build themes around credible criteria.⁶² The following six criteria are borrowed from Wolf's (2013) adaptation of Nietzsche's concept to the study of emotions in IR:

- 1) Accusations of “unfair” status shifts or unjust obstruction of social mobility;
- 2) Principled calls for rectifying “unfair” policies;
- 3) Justifications of retributive measures taken against those policies;
- 4) Articulations that tarnish the social or moral status of the resented actor (in particular accusations that seem farfetched);
- 5) Satisfaction expressed about minor setbacks experienced by that actor (*schadenfreude*);
- 6) Articulations of revenge fantasies.⁶³

These (micro-level) criteria are considered in the “registers” of their expression (macro-level), i.e., the type of collective consciousness (e.g., historical, national) that they draw upon or invoke, and of “functions” that they serve in the particular setting of their articulation. This is combined with an inductive reading of the text that extracts statements corresponding to articulations of desires and emotions, along with the socio-cultural identities and relations that it constructs.

The Case of the Japan–South Korea Trade Dispute

After more than two hundred years of isolationism, Japan was bluntly forced to open its doors to the United States in 1853. In the aftermath of the Opium Wars, the colonial fate that China had been reduced to under the guise of the Open Door Policy seemingly left no other choice to the Japanese but to yield to the pressure.⁶⁴ Although the formal colonization of Japan did not take place, this confrontation may well have marked the beginning of the mimetic desire of Japan *vis-à-vis* the Western other, precisely as the object of desire was no less than the societal, scientific, and technological advances of the time commonly labelled as “modernization.” By 1868, the decentralized warlord caste system, considered the cause of the country's backwardness, was overthrown and a centralized modern state partially modelled according to Euro-American standards was established with the so-called Meiji Restoration. Under the rule of the reinstated emperor, Japan began a massive importation of European and American administrative and technical reforms for the country's modernization project, under the famous slogan of *Wakon yōsai* (和魂洋才) or “Japanese Spirit, Western Technology.”^{65,66}

Fear of Western colonialism was the initial impetus to “catch-up” with the West to ensure the protection of its national sovereignty, but soon a mimetic rivalry emerged between a fully militarized Japan and the US and European powers such as France and Great Britain, and this is an inseparable element from the formation of the Japanese colonial mentality and imperialism. The “renaissance” of the belief in a Japanese “spirit”:⁶⁷ a set of quintessential characteristics of Japan’s ethnic community, accompanied with the belief in the superiority of its national identity, played a significant role in steering the state’s policies at the time. One of the mottos coined by the Meiji government during its liberalization process: *bunmei kaika*, commonly translated as “civilization and enlightenment” strikingly reproduces the European moral discourse of the civilizing mission.⁶⁸ From then onward, the Japanese imperial state placed itself in the position of the “master” *vis-à-vis* its non-modernized neighbors, as the ambitious Pan-Asian territorial expansion to Taiwan, Manchuria, Korea, and the South Pacific islands was morally justified as “protecting” Asian countries from Western greed and guaranteeing their rights.⁶⁹ Yet the same discourse that claimed emancipation as a goal witnessed a turn from *bunmei kaika* to *kōminka*, i.e., the policy of imperialization whereby colonial subjects were to be transfigured from savages to loyal subjects of the Emperor.⁷⁰

The discourse of racial nationalism that justified Japanese imperialism was invented as a moral reference for the fulfilment of the desires for progress and power through mimetic rivalry with the West. It deprived the colonies of their sense of agency as their contribution to modernization was denied, excluding them from the dominant narrative of progress.⁷¹ It is not surprising, then, that the ensuing relationship between Japan and its colonies would lead to the accumulation of strong feelings of anger, humiliation, and disempowerment that generate *ressentiment*. For many centuries, both Japan and Korea⁷² had been part of the Chinese sphere of influence, operating under a combination of Confucian ideology and the Chinese tributary system. Although there had been previous Japanese invasions of Korea,⁷³ which certainly contribute to the convoluted colonial memory between the two countries, the 1910 annexation of Korea probably had the most damaging effect. By alienating itself from the two countries’ shared cultural legacy and creating a hierarchy based on the values of Western civilization, Japan had imposed itself as a model for mimetic desire in the region, establishing a relational inequality that would haunt the development of the two nations long after liberation. The post-war period saw long and excruciating debates on the nature and extent of the crimes committed by Japan in the course of its imperial ambitions,⁷⁴ and these are still not entirely settled today. Indeed, the revisionist stance adopted by the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan since the early 2000s⁷⁵ sparked the return of tensions and distrust between

Japan and its former colonies, as it was characterized by a provocative denial of responsibility and patronizing leadership over the region.

As Hundt and Bleiker (2007) remark, Japan and South Korea ended up becoming similar in many ways: “Both countries are liberal democracies. Both have made remarkable economic progress over several decades. And both have close political and security ties with the United States.”⁷⁶ Yet those similarities are overshadowed by the history of slavery and exploitation that continues to hinder “normal” diplomatic relations between the two “modern” countries—especially as they remain a strong reminder of the injustice suffered in the name of modernization. They also involve a master-slave dichotomy: real enslavement occurred through the practice of forced labor by the Japanese *zaibatsu*, major industrial companies such as Mitsubishi who used Korean workers to support wartime effort during the Second World War and abused their basic human rights. Many of them were also exposed to the Hiroshima atomic bomb in 1945.⁷⁷ Won-soon Park (2006) documents the atrocities that forced workers went through in crude detail:

Under brutal police control, management surveillance, and debilitating working conditions, the Korean laborers suffered from hunger, fear, torture, and murder. Many responded with escape attempts, violent group sabotage, or boycotts and sometimes group revolt and suicide. A 30 per cent runaway rate was reported in the worksites, nearly 60 per cent in the case of the Hokkaido coal mines. The runaway rate jumped after the laborers’ original two-year contracts were forcibly extended by managers who threatened to withhold unpaid wages and compulsory savings.⁷⁸

In addition, thousands of women were forcefully recruited as “comfort women” during the war, a euphemism for sexual slavery for the Japanese army.⁷⁹ The 1965 Basic Relations Treaty marking the normalization of diplomatic relations provided compensation for war damages in the form of monetary aid towards the economic development of South Korea, but it ignored the victims’ suffering. A series of public statements by the Japanese government offered apologies to South Korea, including PM Miyazawa’s 1992 public statement that acknowledged Japan’s war crimes and the 1993 Kono statement recognizing and apologizing for the comfort women issue. However, these apologies were not considered genuine enough in the long term. The Kim Young-sam administration, which was initially eager to improve relations with Japan, underwent what You and Kim (2016) called a “rollercoaster change” in the mid-90s.⁸⁰ This was due to Japan’s foreign policy activism, namely her provocative claims over Dokdo island and the controversial claims by members of the Japanese government regarding the annexation of Korea as legal and even beneficial. The distrust and tensions intensified in the 2000s due to the ways in which Japanese history textbooks were revised to

suppress Japan's moral responsibility.⁸¹ Since 2012, PM Shinzo Abe's revival of territorial claims and historical revisionism further damaged the relationship as his attitude toward the past cast suspicion on the sincerity of previous apologies, which came to be seen as meaningless "political rhetoric."⁸²

In December 2015, South Korean president Park and PM Abe agreed to provide financial compensation to the victims of sex slavery and considered the case closed, but the harsh criticism and indignation of South Korean civil society proved that the issue was far from being solved.⁸³ Forced factory labor, on the other hand, has been the subject of ceaseless judicial battles for the plaintiffs at the Japanese and South Korean supreme courts, aiming at the achievement of transitional justice.⁸⁴ These culminated in the rulings by the South Korean Supreme Court finding Japanese giant companies Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal and Mitsubishi guilty of exploiting Korean labor during wartime and ordering the payment of monetary compensation to individual victims in November 2018. The moral conflict is evident in many ways, starting from the fact that the Japanese government considers the 1965 pact to be a final settlement and its occasional atonement as sufficient for maintaining good relations with its neighbor, superseding the tumultuous colonial past. Similarly, it expressed incomprehension at the South Koreans' persistent pursuit of the issue, ignoring the feeling of injustice harbored by the victims and worsened by Japan's reluctance to assume legal responsibility. The clash of moral views is also palpable when it comes to the criticisms of the Tokyo trials of war criminals by Korean *zainichi* (Korean residents in Japan) as taking into account "war responsibility" but not "colonial responsibility," the latter being altogether different as it refers to the prejudice made against an entire civilization rather than an episodic wartime abuse.⁸⁵

This situation must be understood in relation to the approach that was taken by Japan *vis-à-vis* its past wrongs in East Asia more broadly, including forced labor, massacres, and other forms of abuse in China, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Even when issues of financial reparations were addressed by Japanese companies and the Japanese government funds, the most significant obstacle to reconciliation between the former imperial power and its former colonies stems from the inconsistency of the Japanese position towards its past. Japan has failed to show full repentance and recognition of its violent past, because it assumes a legal model characterized by "monetary damages centralism" instead of an "atonement model." Japan did not fully engage with further means of moral reparation, for example through "1) history education, 2) construction of memorials [...] 3) symbolic actions of apology in front of victims themselves [...] 4) return of remains to relatives, or 5) rituals for tragedies and genocides, because of their importance for the consolation for the victims' damaged feelings."⁸⁶ Furthermore, "new nationalist"

movements associated with the right-wing organization Nippon Kaigi and other public displays of “Japano-centrism,” such as visits to the Yasukuni shrine, undermined reconciliatory efforts.⁸⁷ The attempt to escape full repentance induces the resurfacing of *ressentiment* following major disputes involving South Korea or other communities who have a shared memory of the painful colonial past.

The moral conflict and its emotional repercussions are further complicated by the entanglement of colonial history with post-war economic reconstruction. As a consequence of the 1965 treaty’s provisions for economic cooperation, South Korea has known a long era of dependence on foreign capital, especially investment and loans from Japan, for the sustainment of its developmental strategy.⁸⁸ Foreign capital along with technology transfer fuelled the construction of its semiconductor industry, the most important achievement of the Korean economic miracle, which also gave way to the emergence of the *chaeböl*, large industrial corporations such as Samsung and LG. However, the South Korean semiconductor industry was also dependent on foreign components imported from Japan and, despite its import-substitution policy—which it had to give up by the 1960s in favor of the export-promotion policy under the pressure of the U.S.—the dependency was never overcome.⁸⁹ Thus, *ressentiment* is aggravated by the perception by the Korean government and people that Japan’s intention is to perpetuate developmental inequalities and prevent the pair from fully addressing the dominant-dominated relationship induced by colonialism. Against this background, the decision by the Japanese government to remove South Korea from its list of trusted trade partners,⁹⁰ which imposed tighter controls and restrictions on the supply of necessary semiconductor manufacturing materials, was *perceived* as a deliberate act to prevent South Korea from reaching equal economic development *vis-à-vis* its former colonizer and to maintain its superiority. However, this interpretation is questionable. According to a study by Yeo (2019), due to the declining competitiveness of Japanese electronic components manufacturers for at least a decade, the decision comes as a delayed response to the changing division of labor in the sector and is more taxing for the Japanese economy than the Korean economy.⁹¹ It is interesting, therefore, that the government’s official discourse has taken the direction of anti-Japanese sentiment by insisting on understanding the decision in the light of the persistent historical tensions between the two countries. While Japan invokes “concerns on national security” due to suspicions that South Korea might be secretly supplying North Korea with sensitive materials, South Korea interprets the move as a direct retaliation against the court rulings on forced labor,⁹² and followed up with a retaliation of its own, downgrading Japan’s status as a trade partner and declaring its will to scrap the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) signed in November 2016 under the Park administration.⁹³

In-soo Kim (2020) draws attention to an important element in this context:⁹⁴ because of the structural change in economic relations between the two countries, shifting towards more “coupling” between Korean and Chinese industries, the Japanese decision is more likely to be driven by its own perception of Korea as no longer a country to be underestimated and a rising threat to its economic competitiveness. Accordingly, the Japanese decision is also induced by its emotional reaction linked to a “sense of crisis.” This is more credible since the South Korean government’s formal position has been that it can achieve autonomy *vis-à-vis* Japan and has launched a campaign along these lines.⁹⁵ A notable instance that “set the tone” for the official interpretation of Japan’s action was the speech given by President Moon Jae-in at the Emergency Cabinet Meeting on 2 August 2019, in reaction to the announcement of Japan’s decision to downgrade South Korea as a trade partner. In this case, the government can be seen as a “collective emotions entrepreneur” that has the capacity to influence public opinion and provoke a particular emotional experience by drawing from the people’s shared repertoires of memory and identity. The following section attempts to examine these emotional repertoires in Moon’s speech.

Interpretation of Ressentiment in Moon Jae-in’s Emergency Cabinet Meeting Address on 2 August 2019

Interpretation of President Moon’s speech in the light of the concept of *ressentiment* using the analytical procedure outlined in the methodology section yielded four thematic registers and functions, corresponding to the criteria previously listed. For a visual organization of the excerpts from the speech, please see the appendix.

Four thematic repertoires have been identified:

- **Colonial legacy:** Throughout the speech, the evocation of the colonial legacy is used to evaluate the present with regards to the past, as well as to project an image of the future that transcends the known reality of both past and present. This is done by contrasting the attitude and behavior of Japan and South Korea on this historical axis. The references to the Japanese government suggest a sense of continuity in terms of its evil intentions, as it is accused of deliberately seeking to “hurt,” “attack,” and “retaliate” against the Korean government as well as of behaving in a “selfish and destructive” manner. The image of Japan as an aggressor is also maintained by alluding to its abuse of power against South Korea through “technological hegemony,” drawing an analogy with the Japanese use of superior military technology to subdue its colonies in the twentieth

century. On the other hand, the description of South Korea suggests discontinuity, as the speaker asserts “the Republic of Korea of today is not the Republic of Korea of the past.” There is a move towards self-affirmation by referring to South Korea’s sovereign power and its state capabilities, including capacities for retaliation.

- **Universal or international standards:** An effort to legitimate the South Korean position as opposed to the Japanese position is made by invoking international law and universal standards of value judgment. The Japanese government’s decision is described as a violation of “universal human values,” and so what makes it morally unjustifiable is not only the subjective perception of the South Korean government but universal morality and common sense. Moon reminds his counterpart that “the old order in which one country can dominate another by using force is merely a relic of the past,” which suggests that South Korea can count on diplomatic support, unlike the political isolation it had suffered from at the time of the annexation. He adds that “an international community aware of the facts will never tolerate” Japan’s aggressiveness again, which gives a subtly threatening tone to his discourse.
- **National identity:** Throughout the speech, Moon consistently attempts to invoke a collectively shared Korean national identity as well as a sense of cohesiveness and rapprochement between the government and the people, which places him in the position of a representative of the people’s will. He uses the pronoun “we” to refer to the government, the business sector, and the people. This “we” represents a “superior identity” (우위 정체성), which can be associated with good intentions in contrast with the Japanese evil intentions directed toward it. For instance, the statement “we have come this far today by overcoming countless hardships” constructs the Korean identity as that of the wronged party, while metaphorically connecting it to the collective mission of safeguarding and achieving a just cause. Thus, the Korean people are now ready to “cross” the “mountain” separating them from complete liberation and prosperity. Moon also reminds the people of the special meaning of the year during which the crisis was taking place: the commemoration of the centennial anniversary of the Independence Movement.
- **Economic agency:** This register is used in the speech as a way to demonstrate irrationality in the behavior of the Japanese government, which is contrasted to the legitimacy of the South Korean position. On the one hand, it serves to further enhance the image of Japan as a rule-breaker who has

taken “unilateral and unwarranted measures” that not only “impair[s] the longstanding economic cooperation” between the two countries but also “wreak[s] havoc on the global economy.” On the other hand, it is used to strengthen the agency of South Korea as a stronger economy than it has been in the past, as the government “has countermeasures with which to respond.” Both moves reinforce the moral and political position of South Korea and attempt to mobilise trust in the government. This is expressed in the statement: “if Japan intentionally strikes at our economy, Japan itself will also have to bear significant damage.”

Four emotional functions can be distinguished in the text. Although there is certainly a degree of overlap, passages from the text were classified in terms of the strongest and most evident characteristics that they fulfilled. The emotions identified are: blame, distrust, rancor, and self-assertion. Together, they constitute an ascending movement both in terms of strength but also in terms of the evolution of *ressentiment*. Blame marks the beginning of the confrontational process, as an identity for the self is constructed by reacting to the other: Japan is represented as having assumed the position of dominance in the pair’s relationship, and to pursue evil intentions. Japan carries the “clear intention to attack and hurt,” inflicting harm to South Korea, who on the other hand had sought to “solve the problem” in a pacific way and has now no choice but to hold Japan accountable for her misdeeds. Blame serves to reevaluate the moral dichotomy between the two countries in a manner that reaffirms the binary of “evil” and “good” in an advantageous way to the victim.

With the identity of the “good victim” thus created, a profound distrust of Japan is shaped through denunciation of her acts, the contradictions in her behavior, and her unreliable character as a trade partner. Japan is “selfish,” seeks to dominate rather than cooperate, and is “refuting the free trade order” that she has endorsed before the international community. There is also emphasis on the South Korean government’s cooperative attitude while discrediting its Japanese counterpart. The following step in the emotional discourse is the construction of rancor, which encapsulates an array of interconnected feelings of injury, suffering, anger, and indignation, probably best illustrated by the powerful statement “we will never again lose to Japan.” *Ressentiment* against the former colonizer is here apparent and invokes the memory of humiliation and oppression to subvert the inherited relations of power in favor of the victimized self. Japan is judged guilty of having subjected Korea to “hegemony,” “aggression,” intimidation through its “great economic strength,” of “reopening the old wounds,” and using trade as a weapon. However, Moon insists that the South Korean government will not overlook these crimes, because it can subvert its *ressentiment* into a strategy for gaining power

and defeating Japan. Lastly, the natural culmination of such emotional ascension is the transcendence of inequality enabled by self-assertion. A self-assertive mood translates a politics of empowerment typical of the “activist” tone, where Moon promises that the South Korean people can stand up in the face of adversity to “triumph over Japan,” that the South Korean economy “can surpass Japan’s.” The means to achieve that are claimed to be found in a combination of “trust in the capabilities of the government and businesses” and belief in “the great power of the people.” The peak of the emotionalizing effect of the discourse is the moment of symbolic reversal of the dominant-dominated relationship which, regardless of any genuine intention to enact it, is a primarily imaginative act that pre-empts the reward for the patience and diligent work of South Koreans. In this sense, *ressentiment* has an instrumental aspect in Moon’s moralizing discourse.

The Japanese Reaction

The Japanese government held a distant, rationalizing discourse. Two press statements by Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Taro Kono summarize the official position of the Japanese government and its justification. The first one is a condemnation of the South Korean government’s failure to comply with the provisions of the 1965 treaty that “settled completely and finally” the problems of property and claims related to the colonial period. In a nutshell, South Korea has breached her previous agreements with Japan as well as international law and must face the consequences. The second one is a comment on the South Korean government’s decision to withdraw the intelligence sharing pact between the two countries. Amounting to no more than a list of five bullet points, it restates the facts of the situation and describes the South Korean government’s response as a “total misapprehension of the current regional security environment.” It then laconically denies the accusations made against the Japanese government of using economic retaliation by asserting that “the two issues are of totally different nature,” before urging the other party to reconsider its behavior. The legal and factual language used in these statements seems deliberately aimed to give an objective tone to the accusation and projects a belief in the moral irreproachability of Japan in the conflict. There has been little investment in articulating a full verbal response to the situation, and Prime Minister Abe’s remarks in particular have been dismissive, such as his description of the two countries’ relations at the end of his policy speech at the opening of the 200th Diet session, criticized by the Japanese newspaper *The Mainichi* as “altogether too brief.”⁹⁶

The general attitude and line of conduct adopted by the Japanese government, by appealing formally to the rule-based world order, corresponds to the morality

of the “master” in that it normalizes its own position and construes it as lawful despite its inconsistency, in contrast to the subjective approach taken by the South Korean government in reconsidering its previous decisions in the light of contingent developments. However, Japan as one of the champions of free trade refuses to acknowledge her own deviation from the rule to serve her interests. This is illustrated through the use of “national security” as an exception to the rule, justifying the demotion of South Korea from her list of most trusted trade partners as an “active” act of compliance rather than a reactive act destined to discipline her former colony. This in turn can be interpreted as a morality based on mimetic desire whereby the colonizer utilizes the moral dichotomy of the colonized to construct its own identity of righteous strength, whereas the colonized mimics the colonizer by constructing an identity of righteous weakness that can be transformed into strength.

There are also external factors influencing the relationship between Japan and Korea. If one considers the conditions in which the colonial period ended in 1945 for both countries, one immediately realizes that the influence of the United States has not been minimal. The end of the war officially brought an ambivalent independence to Korea, but at the same time meant a humiliating surrender for Japan, announced by the revered Emperor himself, the highest symbol of the nation’s sovereignty and imperial prestige. It has been suggested that under the Allied Occupation (1945–52), the Japanese “saw themselves both as former colonisers with regards their former territories and as a colonised or semi-colonised people by the United States.”⁹⁷ The damaging effect of an external domination dictating internal policy (and even the constitution of the modern Japanese state itself) was enough to trigger an attitude of self-assertion in order to elevate its status *vis-à-vis* the U.S., and in this sense one can see Japan’s experience as one of *ressentiment* as well. Moreover, the U.S. has in many ways become Japan’s target of mimetic rivalry: Shinzo Abe’s government seems to borrow from U.S. policy, both in terms of trade (retaliation under the guise of “national security” concerns) and more generally in seeking regional leadership by adopting the “Japan is Back” slogan⁹⁸ and placing the interests of the nation above all else. The Japanese conservative government is in this sense dealing with the unresolved injustice of the Japanese collective memory, by adopting a “master” moral position borrowed from its Western “other.” This position legitimates Japan’s economic strategy and her aspirations for leadership, but it fails to address the lingering *ressentiment*, and to enable a change in the interpretive frames sustained by the collective memories and identities of her former colonies. Ultimately, it patronizes the morality of resistance and subversion that underpins the tone adopted by Moon.

State–Civil Society Relations and the Instrumental Use of Ressentiment

The strong emotional response to the Japanese decision was overwhelming from the perspective of civil society, with the relapse of popular sentiment into anti-Japanese movements, illustrated by incidents such as public self-immolation⁹⁹ and the reproval of a TV commercial judged offensive to victims of forced labor.¹⁰⁰ The most important wave of protest was the consumer boycott of Japanese products or “boycott Japan” (보이콧 재팬) as a popular response to Japan’s trade restrictions.¹⁰¹ Boycott movements had arisen in previous years, for example in 1992 after the comfort women issue was publicly acknowledged, in 2001 and 2006 due to the history textbook distortions, and in 2013 and 2015 in the context of the territorial disputes. However, the degree of solidarity and participation in 2019 had the most dramatic and enduring effects on public sentiment toward Japan: the boycott targeted every kind of economic activity linked with Japan, from cars and electronics to travel or cultural products. The strength of the movement was amplified by its coincidence with the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the establishment of Korea’s Provisional Government. The movement was explicitly interpreted by some participants as a revival of the March 1st movement’s or *samil undong* 3·1운동 spirit of resistance against the Japanese. They adopted a provocative slogan that juxtaposes Japan’s current actions with its past imperialism: “I could not take part in the liberation movement, but I do take part in the boycott movement (독립운동은 못했어도 불매운동은 한다).”¹⁰² This involved a wider informational campaign on Korean history through online YouTube channels and conventional publications; these did not simply have an anti-Japanese tone but also reflected the lingering bitterness about issues such as pro-Japanese collaborators who are still considered unpunished by a large number of the Korean people.¹⁰³ While this indicates the presence of a shared emotional experience of *ressentiment* triggered by the recent incident, its meaning in this contemporary context is more complex.

Analyzing consumer campaigns using semantic network analysis, Song (2020) found that the meaning of the anti-Japan campaign as expressed by online participants can be broken down into five major attributes:¹⁰⁴ 1) the participation of consumers as well as small businesses was considered as a matter of independent beliefs and personal conviction; 2) it was directly associated with a patriotic attitude linked with the memory of the liberation movement; 3) participation was perceived as a natural behavior, which brought satisfaction as an opportunity to express discontent; 4) it was thought to spring from individuals’ “free” decision making; and 5) it was understood as a way to realize social justice by reducing dependency on foreign products. In other words, there is an amalgamation

between different elements of a “superior identity.” It is clear that communication through traditional and new mass media has played a role in the spread of collectively shared symbolic representations of emotions in Korean society. Moreover, one can immediately see the congruence between the shared meanings of the boycott Japan movement’s campaigners and those expressed in the president’s speech. It is not possible to establish direct causality between the speech and the campaign; nevertheless, the correspondence between the recurrent themes in popular discourse and the registers of colonial legacy, national identity, and economic agency invoked by Moon indicates their mutual reinforcement.

The link between the state and civil society responses is clearly present, but it is not an easy task to fully grasp its significance. On the one hand, participation as part of a patriotic agenda is linked to the shared narratives and symbols of national liberation, which are defined against Japan as an external other. On the other hand, participation for the purpose of reaching social justice is connected to the shared desires of the people for self-empowerment and, more simply, for a better life. This ambivalent emotional experience is anchored in Korean history and the nature of its collective identity, which was formed both through conflict and harmony between state-led narratives and social movements. In this regard, Dudden’s (2008) analysis of the issues of memory and apology in East Asia brings an important aspect to take into consideration.¹⁰⁵ She observed that, at several points in Korean history, the state failed to represent the interests of citizens, most notably under President Park when the 1965 basic relations treaty was signed, which accepted financial aid for development as compensation for Japan’s crimes and excluded individual claims. Furthermore, contrasting South and North Korea’s official interpretations of Japanese rule as “colonial occupation” and “military occupation,” respectively, she points out that the South Korean state’s choice facilitates the public targeting of Japan as an object of blame and “cathartic release” of people’s suffering. Yet at the same time, it diverts attention from the Korean state’s own responsibility in the crystallization of social injustice and its collaboration with the U.S., which still operates military bases on Korean soil. It was under President Rhee, for instance, that the territorial dispute over Dokdo and fishing rights in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) became a public matter, as the U.S.-backed leader tried to instrumentalize it to “secure his claims to control Korea.”¹⁰⁶

In other words, the Korean state crafted the narrative of “illegal Japan” as a strategy of self-legalization, to which it has then grafted the genuinely painful stories of Japanese abuse, exploitation, and victimization of Koreans. In a similar vein, the dictatorial regimes from Rhee to Chun have been considered as illegal, but they are part of the genealogy of the contemporary Korean state and this is

the source of a continuous tension between state and civil society. A significant element to consider here is that the quest for justice with regards to Japanese abuse was made possible through relentless popular activism; a good example of this is the issue of the comfort women. Since the late 1980s, a number of non-governmental, grassroots organizations representing women in South Korea, North Korea, and other East Asian countries have been involved in carrying the victims' voices to an international audience, with one particularly notable instance being the Women's International Tribunal in Tokyo in 2000, which posthumously found Emperor Hirohito responsible for the sexual enslavement of women by the Japanese military.¹⁰⁷ Yet, these women not only had to face hurtful comments from Japanese officials more than a decade later representing them as willing prostitutes,¹⁰⁸ but also betrayal by greedy politicians at home such as the issue of fraud by Yoon Mee-hyang, a member of the Democratic party, charged with embezzlement and misuse of funds dedicated to supporting the victims.¹⁰⁹ The role of civil society has been prominent in pursuing collective justice, while the commitment of the state has been less forthcoming.

For the above reasons, it is difficult to disentangle sincerity from instrumentality in the collective emotion of *ressentiment* that erupted from state and civil society in the context of the 2019 trade dispute. Moon was elected in 2017 after Park's impeachment as a long-awaited democratic and visionary leader, with the ambitious promises of tackling major challenges such as the increasing socio-economic divides and the task of reconciliation with North Korea.¹¹⁰ As a political and human rights activist with a long history of involvement in opposition and anti-corruption protests,¹¹¹ he was a promising candidate for addressing social injustice but he had to face the challenge of a minority government, and in this sense it is not implausible that he resorted to populist strategies to promote his party's political agenda. The way in which his background and political position informed his choice in terms of policy towards Japan suggests that his passionate rhetoric on, and condemnation of, Japanese decisions could be another variety of the well-trodden path of mobilizing support by re-animating hatred of the "enemy," as one newspaper has suggested.¹¹² Along these lines, Moon was accused by a Japanese journalist of playing a "split personality" trick in his dealings with Japan, alternating between the committed activist and the rational statesman in an effort to manage complexity at home.¹¹³

By the same token, it is important to remember that both the 1965 basic relations treaty and the 2015 agreement on the comfort women issue were signed under two controversial and unpopular presidents: the first one was Park Chung-hee, a dictator whose rule famously undermined human rights in South Korea, and the second was his daughter Park Geun-hye who was later found

guilty of abuse of power, corruption, and fraud. Moon's decision to discard the 2015 agreement and his denunciative discourse can be seen as a way to distance himself and his administration from those infamous regimes, in order to give more credibility and support to his own party and political agenda. Hence, neither of the following can be excluded: that Moon might be genuinely trying to stay faithful to his agenda by representing the people's "voice," and that he might be attempting to manipulate public opinion while maintaining a reasonable prospect of cooperation with Japan due to the nature of the trilateral alliance between the two countries and the U.S. and the need to safeguard the potential of future trade relations. Moon has encouraged the resurfacing of collective *ressentiment* by denouncing the injustice of the Japanese government's decision and defending the moral position of South Korea, while maintaining an open window for future normalization. The strategic shift towards overcoming dependency on the supply of materials, conquering the global supply chains, and becoming able to compete for regional leadership, is another reason for which popular support is sought.

On the Japanese side, too, the need for a strategy to mobilize support has risen, especially after the 2011 nuclear disaster and the economic decline known as the "lost decades."¹¹⁴ With the second accession of Prime Minister Abe to power in 2012, the "Japan is Back" rhetoric played a key role in creating political consensus and reinforcing the power of the conservative party in the face of challenging domestic, regional, and global conditions and concerns over military and economic security¹¹⁵—whether the latter are real or imagined. It has been argued that the LDP has been using the populist-nationalist card to manage factional divisions and divert attention from the growth of elitism.¹¹⁶ Thus, taking a hard stance against South Korea by imposing trade restrictions is not an unlikely option to add to its political repertoire both for the purpose of domestic support and regional self-assertion (see Kim Wan-joong 2019).¹¹⁷ In addition, China's continuous rise as a regional power is not without effect on the intensification of the Japanese elite's sense of crisis and mimetic rivalry within the Japan-US-China triangle.¹¹⁸ The pursuit of "leadership" amid a tense climate of regional trade and security has impacted foreign policy choices made in recent years as well as increased pressure at home. As Packer (2018) argued:

Japan's mimetic response to the West in the Meiji era; its imperial expansion that led to war; the "sacred" pall left by the atomic bombings; and the relentless postwar "catch-up" competition—these phases confirm many of mimetic theory's figures. And they are very similar to the dynamics appearing now in the historic situation facing China and the United States.¹¹⁹

The moral qualities of the "master" described by Nietzsche, his "active" attitude and guiltless greed, should not be dissociated from the political agenda of great

power players in the contemporary world. The unpleasant term of “master” denoting a position of dominance has been conveniently replaced by the more palatable “leader”: one who directs, rather than controls others, for the mutual benefit of “allies,” but the power dynamics are not very different. Reflecting on the role of U.S. leadership, Eun (2020) stressed how much of a deep and lasting impact on East Asian and Korean politics it has had.¹²⁰ The very processes of Korea’s Liberation, the North–South division, and the ensuing U.S.–Japan and U.S.–ROK alliances, have considerably narrowed down and limited the scope of the South Korean government’s security policy to the threats identified by the U.S. and diverted attention and energy away from completing the task of decolonization. He refers to this situation as “hybrid coloniality” (혼종 식민성), in which the indigenous culture and exogenous (Western) culture have merged through the “re-territorialization” (재영토화) of the latter in the indigenous space. Accordingly, the formation of the Korean political right and left (conservative and progressive), has occurred through a hybrid process whereby there is a general understanding of the right as “pro-U.S.” and the left as “anti-U.S.,” while in fact their very existence ensures the continuation of coloniality. This is because South Korea as a sovereign nation-state decided to delegate its security to the U.S. and continues to make decisions with the U.S. as a referent, creating another relationship of subordination underlying the power asymmetries of the military alliance, referred to as “epistemic subordination” (인식적 종속), which permeates the conduct of political and social affairs. The solution, for Eun, is to move towards an “empathetic pluralism” (공감적 다원주의), which shifts the focus from nation-state-centered security toward the everyday needs of the people.

Superposed onto the Japan–South Korea relations is this very nation-state-centrism, which, as Bong-jin Kim (2011) argued, has sustained dichotomous thinking by opposing colonialism and anti-colonialism, the illegitimacy of the former and legitimacy of the latter, and obstructing reconciliation.¹²¹ It is more important to acknowledge the factors that have shaped the history of East Asia more broadly, such as U.S. intervention: its role in the division of the peninsula as well as in shaping the Cold War regional power structure and establishing a great power logic of regional “threats” such as North Korea or China. This logic legitimates nationalist movements and perpetuates tension, concealing the “complicity” of states involved in the status quo and enabling Japan to deny its share of responsibility just like the other parties. This echoes the problem of mimetic rivalry and the way in which it perpetuates conflict through the mirroring of each others’ desires. In this case, the mimesis is mediated by the cognitive frames established by nationalist narratives. As Shin Gi-wook (2019) argues, there is a sort of left-wing chauvinistic populism underneath the South Korean position in the trade dispute and which obstinately clings to an anti-Japan stance, spearheaded by Moon’s

party.¹²² *Ressentiment* between the people of South Korea and Japan is due to the construction of their identities around their opposed national narratives on the (im)morality of colonialism, which essentially serves to legitimate national agendas and power claims, not to achieve justice. The latter requires a de-centering of history away from the strictly “national” version, acknowledgement of the various causes of conflict in the region, and a move away from the Cold War structure built on threat perception and move toward trust-building.

More than anything else, justice has to begin at the domestic level before it is realizable at the international one. Yang et al. (2018) deplored how much Korean society is still suffering.¹²³ It had suffered due to its collective mobilization for the goals of economic growth until the 1990s and has continued to suffer afterward as there is little investment in well-being and much more emphasis on competition as a national creed. This is a historical pattern that Kim Hong-jung (2018) termed “survivalist modernity,” whereby South Koreans are interpellated by the ruling elites into self-sacrifice for the sake of national development.¹²⁴ The fact that this pattern has been carried into the twenty-first century may be the greatest barrier to reconciliation that underpins every polemic in Japan–South Korea relations. It is through a participatory, open, and democratic process in *both* societies that progress can be made. This requires overcoming the instrumental morality of populist nationalism, the politics of *ressentiment*, and moving toward empathy and recognition of plural experiences at the individual and collective levels. This is the task left to political elites and civil society activists in both countries.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the role of emotions in the tense relationship between Japan and South Korea. It has drawn from the existent research on emotion studies in international politics and attempted to integrate works from moral philosophy into its agenda, namely those of René Girard and Friedrich Nietzsche. These two scholars have coined, respectively, the concepts of “mimetic desire” and “*ressentiment*” to describe the psychological processes characterizing human beings’ attitudes, emotions, and behavior in relation to their desires for superiority and equality, and how such desires affect the construction of their moralities. These concepts were proposed as a theoretical framework to understand the role of emotions in international relations through a case study of the trade dispute between Japan and South Korea.

First, it has argued that in the context of colonial relations, desire for superiority can be seen as a mimetic process whereby collective social entities, such as nations, enter into a relationship of rivalry, mirror each other’s desire for

power, and compete for subduing and exploiting less powerful entities as a way to enhance their status *vis-à-vis* the other(s). These acts of power in turn lead to a reactive attitude from the part of the subject upon which it has been exercised and the emergence of the moral dichotomy of “master-slave” or “dominant-dominated.” The latter is characterized by a desire to transcend inequality by means of emotions contained in *ressentiment*, which allows, in a Nietzschean sense, to subvert its structural inferiority through claims of moral (il)legitimacy. Second, the paper has proposed a way to demonstrate the relevance of mimetic desire and *ressentiment* in the case of the Japan–South Korea trade dispute through an overview of the relations between the two countries and by interpreting South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s address at the Emergency Cabinet Meeting on 2 August 2019. This text was considered as a symbolic manifestation of *ressentiment* and at the same time as an instrumental communicative act that diffuses the emotion and encourages people to embrace and sustain a certain pattern of belief and reaction. Lastly, the paper has examined the manifestation of *ressentiment* in civil society’s response to Japan’s decision and how it relates to that of the state, proposing that despite congruence between the two, there are indications that the intentions or motives behind the reaction do not align with the same object of desire. While state leaders have conventionally aimed to increase Korea’s national status and power *vis-à-vis* Japan, the Korean people have aimed to obtain justice and equality. Addressing the people’s *ressentiment* requires that the state make a bold move away from narratives of great power politics, which perpetuate the glorification of a superior national identity, to narratives that account more fully for ordinary people’s suffering and desires.

Appendix: Emotional Discourse Analysis of Resentment in Moon Jae-in's Emergency Cabinet Meeting Address on 2 August 2019

Functions and Criteria	Registers	Colonial Legacy	Universal/International Standards	National Identity	Economic Agency
<p>Blame/moral re-valuation Criterion 1 Accusations of "unfair" status shifts or unjust obstruction of social mobility</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "These moves by the Japanese Government carry the clear intention to attack and hurt our economy" • "The Japanese Government dismissed the Korean Government's proposal to put our heads together to solve the problem diplomatically" • "The Japanese Government is responsible for having made the situation worse by ignoring the Korean Government" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Japan's action also violates such universal human values" • "The Japanese Government will be entirely held accountable" 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Japanese Government's decision is "a very reckless decision" • "The Japanese Government must withdraw its unilateral and unwarranted measures"
<p>Distrust/discrediting the Other Criterion 2 Principled calls for rectifying "unfair" policies</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The Japanese Government's decision is undeniable trade retaliation against our Supreme Court's rulings on Korean victims of forced labor during colonial rule." • "The action contradicts the Japanese Government's own stance expressed in the past that individual victims' right to claim damages had never been waived." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The old order in which one country can dominate another by using force is merely a relic of the past." • "The Japanese Government through its action is refuting the free trade order it championed at the G20 Summit." 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The step taken by Japan today is something that impairs the longstanding economic cooperation and friendly partnership between our two countries" • "It is a selfish, destructive act that will cripple the global supply chain and wreak havoc on the global economy."

Functions and Criteria Registers	Colonial Legacy	Universal/International Standards	National Identity	Economic Agency
<p>Rancor/subversion Criterion 4 Articulations that tarnish the social or moral status of the resented actor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We will never again lose to Japan." • "[We will] ensure that the country will never again be subjected to technological hegemony" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If Japan, the aggressor, reopens the old wounds after so long, an international community aware of the facts will never tolerate it." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We will never overlook such circumstances where Japan, the instigator of these wrongs, is turning on us." • "This year in particular, we committed ourselves to another 100 years while commemorating the centennial of the March First Independence Movement" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If Japan-even though it has great economic strength-attempts to harm our economy, the Korean Government also has countermeasures with which to respond"
<p>Self-assertion/symbolic reversal of dominance Criterion 6 Articulations of revenge fantasies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I appeal to the public to have trust in the capabilities of the Government and our businesses" • "The Republic of Korea today is not the Republic of Korea of the past. [...] We have the potential to fully overcome any difficulty" 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We have come this far today by overcoming countless hardships [...] we will in fact turn adversities into opportunities to leap forward." • "We can fully triumph over Japan. Our economy can surpass Japan's." • "This is a mountain that we must eventually cross" • "The Government will lead the way, believing in the great power of the people." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Although it is something we never hoped for, the Korean Government will resolutely take corresponding measures in response to Japan's unjustifiable economic retaliatory measures" • "If Japan intentionally strikes at our economy, Japan itself will also have to bear significant damage."

Selected statements in Korean

Functions & Criteria Registers	Colonial legacy	Universal/international standards	National identity	Economic agency
<p>Blame/moral re-valuation Criterion 1. Accusations of "unfair" status shifts or unjust obstruction of social mobility</p>	<p>“일본 정부의 조치가 우리 경제를 공격하고 우리 경제의 미래성장을 가로막아 타격을 가져왔다는 분명한 의도를 가지고 있다는 사실입니다.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “외교적 해법을 제시하고, 막대한 길로 가지 말 것을 경고하며, 문제해결을 위해 머리를 맞대자는 우리 정부의 제안을 일본 정부는 끝내 받아들이지 않았습니다.” “우리 정부와 국제사회의 외교적 해결 노력을 외면하고 상황을 악화시켜온 책임이 일본 정부에 있는 것이 명확해진 이상 [...]” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “‘강제노동 금지’와 ‘3관본림에 기초한 민주주의’라는 인류 보편적 가치와 국제법의 대원칙을 위반하는 행위입니다.” “앞으로 벌어질 사태의 책임도 전적으로 일본 정부에 있다는 점을 분명히 경고합니다.” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “대단히 무모한 결정” “멈출 수 있는 길은 오직 하나, 일본 정부가 일방적이고 부당한 조치를 하루속히 철회하고 대화의 길로 나오는 것입니다.”
<p>Distrust/discrediting the Other Criterion 2. Principled calls for rectifying “unfair” policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “무슨 이유로 변명하든, 일본 정부의 이번 조치는 우리 대법원의 강제징용 판결에 대한 명백한 무언보입니다.” “개인청구권은 소멸되지 않았다고 일본 정부 자신이 밝혀왔던 과거 입장에도 모순됩니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “힘으로 상대를 제압하던 질서는 과거의 유물일 뿐입니다.” “일본이 G20 회의에서 강조한 자유무역질서를 스스로 부정하는 행위입니다.” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “일본의 조치는 양국 간의 오랜 경제 협력과 우호 협력 관계를 훼손하는 것으로서 양국 관계에 대한 중대한 도전입니다.” “글로벌 공급망을 무너뜨려 세계 경제에 큰 피해를 끼치는 이기적인 민폐 행위로 국제사회의 지탄을 면할 수 없을 것입니다.”

Functions & Criteria Registers	Colonial legacy	Universal/international standards	National identity	Economic agency
Rancor/subversion Criterion 4 Articulations that tarnish the social or moral status of the resented actor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “우리는 다시는 일본에게 지지 않을 것입니다.” “다시는 기술 패권에 휘둘리지 않는 것은 물론 제조업 강국의 위상을 더욱 높이는 계기로 삼겠습니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “이제 와서 가해자인 일본이 오히려 상처를 헤집는다면, 국제사회의 양식이 결코 용인하지 않을 것이라는 점을 일본은 직시하기 바랍니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “가해자인 일본이 적반하장으로 오히려 큰소리치는 상황을 결코 좌시하지 않겠습니다.” “우리는 올해 특별히 3.1 독립운동과 임시정부 수립 100주년을 기념하며, 새로운 미래 100년을 다짐했습니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 비록 일본이 경제 강국이지만 우리 경제에 피해를 입히려 든다면, 우리 역시 맞대응할 수 있는 방안들을 가지고 있습니다.”
Self-assertion/symbolic reversal of dominance Criterion 6 Articulations of revenge fantasies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “정부와 우리 기업의 역량을 믿고, 자신감을 가지고, 함께 단합해 주실 것을 국민들께 호소 드립니다.” “오늘의 대한민국은 과거의 대한민국이 아닙니다. [...] 어떠한 어려움도 충분히 극복할 자력을 가지고 있습니다.” 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “우리는 수많은 역경을 이겨내고 오늘에 이르렀습니다. [...] 우리는 역경을 오히려 도약하는 기회로 만들어낼 것입니다.” “우리는 충분히 일본을 이겨낼 수 있습니다.” “우리 경제가 일본 경제를 뛰어넘을 수 있습니다.” “압박가는 넘어야 할 산입니다. 국민의 위대한 힘을 믿고 정부가 앞장서겠습니다.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “결코 바라지 않았던 일이지만 우리 정부는 일본의 부당한 경제보복 조치에 대해 상응하는 조치를 단호하게 취해 나갈 것입니다.” “우리 경제를 의도적으로 타격한다면 일본도 큰 피해를 감수해야 할 것입니다.”

Original Speech in Korean

(Source: <https://www1.president.go.kr/articles/6886>)

우리는 다시는 일본에게 지지 않을 것입니다 「제31회 임시 국무회의」
2019-08-02

[임시 국무회의 모두발언 전문]

제31회 임시 국무회의를 시작하겠습니다.

비상한 외교·경제 상황에 대응하기 위해 긴급하게 국무회의를 소집했습니다.

오늘 오전 일본 정부는 우리나라를 백색국가에서 배제하는 결정을 내렸습니다.

문제해결을 위한 외교적 노력을 거부하고 사태를 더욱 악화시키는 대단히 무모한 결정으로, 깊은 유감을 표합니다.

외교적 해법을 제시하고, 막다른 길로 가지 말 것을 경고하며,

문제해결을 위해 머리를 맞대자는 우리 정부의 제안을 일본 정부는 끝내 받아들이지 않았습니다.

일정한 시한을 정해 현재의 상황을 더 이상 악화시키지 않으면서 협상할 시간을 가질 것을 촉구하는 미국의 제안에도 응하지 않았습니다.

우리 정부와 국제사회의 외교적 해결 노력을 외면하고 상황을 악화시켜온 책임이 일본 정부에 있는 것이 명확해진 이상,

앞으로 벌어질 사태의 책임도 전적으로 일본 정부에 있다는 점을 분명히 경고합니다.

무슨 이유로 변명하든, 일본 정부의 이번 조치는 우리 대법원의 강제징용 판결에 대한 명백한 무역보복입니다.

또한, '강제노동 금지'와 '3권분립에 기초한 민주주의'라는 인류 보편적 가치와 국제법의 대원칙을 위반하는 행위입니다.

일본이 G20 회의에서 강조한 자유무역질서를 스스로 부정하는 행위입니다.

개인청구권은 소멸되지 않았다고 일본 정부 자신이 밝혀왔던 과거 입장과도 모순됩니다.

우리가 더욱 심각하게 받아들이는 것은 일본 정부의 조치가 우리 경제를 공격하고 우리 경제의 미래성장을 가로막아 타격을 가하겠다는 분명한 의도를 가지고 있다는 사실입니다.

우리의 가장 가까운 이웃이며 우방으로 여겨왔던 일본이 그와 같은 조치를 취한 것이 참으로 실망스럽고 안타깝습니다.

일본의 조치는 양국 간의 오랜 경제 협력과 우호 협력 관계를 훼손하는 것으로서 양국 관계에 대한 중대한 도전입니다.

또한, 글로벌 공급망을 무너뜨려 세계 경제에 큰 피해를 끼치는 이기적인 민폐 행위로 국제사회의 지탄을 면할 수 없을 것입니다.

일본의 조치로 인해 우리 경제는 엄중한 상황에서 어려움이 더해졌습니다.

하지만 우리는 다시는 일본에게 지지 않을 것입니다.

우리는 수많은 역경을 이겨내고 오늘에 이르렀습니다.

적지 않은 어려움이 예상되지만, 우리 기업들과 국민들에게 그 어려움을 극복할 역량이 있습니다.

과거에도 그래왔듯이 우리는 역경을 오히려 도약하는 기회로 만들어낼 것입니다.

정부도 소재·부품의 대체 수입처와 재고 물량 확보, 원천기술의 도입, 국산화를 위한 기술개발과 공장 신·증설, 금융지원 등 기업의 피해를 최소화하기 위해 할 수 있는 지원을 다하겠습니다.

나아가 소재·부품 산업의 경쟁력을 높여 다시는 기술 패권에 휘둘리지 않는 것은 물론 제조업 강국의 위상을 더욱 높이는 계기로 삼겠습니다.

정부와 기업, 대기업과 중소기업, 노와 사, 그리고 국민들이 함께 힘을 모은다면 충분히 해낼 수 있는 일입니다.

정부와 우리 기업의 역량을 믿고, 자신감을 가지고, 함께 단합해 주실 것을 국민들께 호소 드립니다.

한편으로, 결코 바라지 않았던 일이지만 우리 정부는 일본의 부당한 경제보복 조치에 대해 상응하는 조치를 단호하게 취해 나갈 것입니다.

비록 일본이 경제 강국이지만 우리 경제에 피해를 입히려 든다면, 우리 역시 맞대응할 수 있는 방안들을 가지고 있습니다.

가해자인 일본이 적반하장으로 오히려 큰소리치는 상황을 결코 좌시하지 않겠습니다.

일본 정부의 조치 상황에 따라 우리도 단계적으로 대응조치를 강화해 나갈 것입니다.

이미 경고한 바와 같이, 우리 경제를 의도적으로 타격한다면 일본도 큰 피해를 감수해야 할 것입니다.

우리 정부는 지금도 대응과 맞대응의 악순환을 원치 않습니다.

멈출 수 있는 길은 오직 하나, 일본 정부가 일방적이고 부당한 조치를 하루속히 철회하고 대화의 길로 나오는 것입니다.

한국과 일본, 양국 간에는 불행한 과거사로 인한 깊은 상처가 있습니다.

하지만 양국은 오랫동안 그 상처를 꿰매고, 약을 바르고 붕대를 감으며 상처를 치유하려 노력해왔습니다.

그런데 이제 와서 가해자인 일본이 오히려 상처를 헤집는다면, 국제사회의 양식이 결코 용인하지 않을 것이라는 점을 일본은 직시하기 바랍니다.

국민 여러분께도 특별히 말씀드립니다.

우리는 올해 특별히 3.1 독립운동과 임시정부 수립 100주년을 기념하며, 새로운 미래 100년을 다짐했습니다.

힘으로 상대를 제압하던 질서는 과거의 유물일 뿐입니다.

오늘의 대한민국은 과거의 대한민국이 아닙니다.

국민의 민주 역량은 세계 최고 수준이며, 경제도 비할 바 없이 성장하였습니다.

어떠한 어려움도 충분히 극복할 자력을 가지고 있습니다.

당장은 어려움이 있을 것입니다.

그러나 도전에 굴복하면 역사는 또 다시 반복됩니다.

지금의 도전을 오히려 기회로 여기고 새로운 경제 도약의 계기로 삼는다면 우리는 충분히 일본을 이겨낼 수 있습니다.

우리 경제가 일본 경제를 뛰어넘을 수 있습니다.

역사에 지름길은 있어도 생략은 없다는 말이 있습니다.

언젠가는 넘어야 할 산입니다.

지금 이 자리에서 멈춰 선다면, 영원히 산을 넘을 수 없습니다.

국민의 위대한 힘을 믿고 정부가 앞장서겠습니다.

도전을 이겨낸 승리의 역사를 국민과 함께 또 한 번 만들겠습니다.

우리는 할 수 있습니다.

정부 각 부처도 기업의 어려움과 함께한다는 비상한 각오로 임해 주기 바랍니다.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Prof. Kevin Gray and Prof. Dean Wilson for their feedback and critical comments on drafts of this paper. I am also grateful to anonymous EJKS reviewers for their constructive criticism, and to the panel members and participants of the BISA Emotions in Politics and IR Working Group (9 Dec. 2019) and the Sussex Global Studies Chapter Chats (4 Feb. 2020) for their helpful feedback and suggestions on earlier versions of this paper.
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