2022 ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE PAG. 61–84
STUDIA TERRITORIALIA 2

THE FORMATION OF THE MEMORIES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA

NATALIA MATVEEVA
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

Received September 25, 2022; Revised February 4, 2023; Accepted February 15, 2023.

Abstract
This article focuses on the state-sanctioned and state-led formation of memories related to economic development in the service of post-colonial nation-building. Looking at North and South Korea in the 1940s through the 1960s as a case study, it examines the different strategies utilized by the "pedagogical states" on opposite sides of the Cold War divide to create in the national consciousness a lasting historical myth, in this case – the myth that both countries' economic development was truly national and had no relation to their former metropole Japan. Based on primary sources, including public speeches by North and South Korean leaders and archival documents, this article explores the importance of public historical education to the formation of memories related to economic development, ways of achieving that, and the role played by nationalism in each country as the memories were formed. Finally, it assesses the role of public historical education in nation-building, its long-term efficacy, and its influence on the present day.
Keywords: memory formation; colonial legacy; economic development; South Korea; North Korea
DOI: 10.14712/23363231.2023.4

Natalia Matveeva holds a PhD in Korean Studies from SOAS University of London. E-mail: shotayio@gmail.com.

Introduction

The decades after the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Eastern bloc have seen a rise in interest towards studies of historical memory and memory formation all over the world, in Asia as well as in Europe or America. Historical memory can be defined as a socially transformed version of the past, constructed to suit the needs and interests of the social group doing the construction.[1] Benedict Anderson defines the nation itself as an "imagined political community," imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of a group.[2] Thus, historical memory does not necessarily equal the historical truth but often creates an alternative version of the past, a historical myth.

As historical memory is "imagined" and constructed, special attention in scholarship has been given to the politics of memory, the ways the past is re-constructed and represented in the present, and to those who are doing the construction.[3] The politics of memory can be understood as the "contestation of meaning" that occurs within and between the various forms and practices of organization of historical memory by political actors, and the struggle to "install particular memories at the centre of a cultural world, at the expense of others which are marginalized and forgotten."[4] Different actors can be distinguished in the construction of historical memory, such as the state, the civil society, social groups and individuals.[5] Yet if we speak about East Asia in the Cold War, it was most often the political elites who had both the agenda and the need to shape historical memory, and the means to do it.

However, if memory can be constructed by the nation-states and other political and social agencies, it can also be contested by and among them. The

---

1 Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

2 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 6–7.

3 Among such studies can be named Alexandra Barahona de Brito, Carmen Gonzalez-Enriquez, and Paloma Aguilar, eds., *The politics of memory: Transitional justice in democratizing societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, eds., *Contested pasts: The politics of memory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu, eds., *The politics of memory in postwar Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Gabriel Ricci, ed., *Justice and the politics of memory* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017); Kamila Szczepanska, *The politics of war memory in Japan: Progressive civil society groups and contestation of memory of the Asia-Pacific war* (London: Routledge, 2014).

4 Timothy G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper, eds., *The politics of war memory and commemoration* (London: Routledge, 2000), xi.

5 Ibid.

way the past is understood and interpreted has political, economic, and ethical consequences for the present. As Jan Assman puts it, "the present is 'haunted' by the past and the past is modeled, invented, reinvented, and reconstructed by the present."[6] Thus, contests over the past, over which version of history should be considered as true, become also the contest over the present. And the focus of contestation is often not so much the conflicting accounts of what actually happened in the past so much as the matter of who or what has the right to speak for that past in the present,[7] whose or what version of the past will be dominant in a given society. For that reason, memory is often contested at the highest level between nation-states and involves political leaderships.

In East Asia, the matter of historical memory and how the shared past is and should be remembered has after the end of the Cold War emerged as one of the major contentious issues between the countries of the region. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo point out several factors contributing to that rise.[8] Strategic interests that used to unite the countries like Japan and South Korea against a common communist foe gave way to nationalism and reemergence of unresolved disputes around the issues of Japanese aggression and colonialism in the late nineteenth – first half of the twentieth centuries and during the Pacific war.[9] Social changes within the countries of the region and political liberalization in some of them allowed for social groups and previously muted voices to be heard and to become actors in the politics of memory formation. And the economic rise of China and South Korea challenged not only Japan's economic supremacy in the broad East Asian region but also the historical narratives which had been dominant during the Cold War.

The studies of memory and memory politics in East Asia tend to look at the war memory and issues surrounding it, at how the war is remembered in Japan, its former colonies, and China, and contested between them.[10] This article, on

---

[6] Jan Assman, *Moses the Egyptian. The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 9.

[7] Hodgkin and Radstone, eds., *Contested pasts*, 1–2.

[8] Tsuyoshi Hasegawa and Kazuhiko Togo, eds., *East Asia's Haunted Present: Historical Memories and the Resurgence of Nationalism* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2008).

[9] For studies on it see, e.g., Jungmin Seo, "Politics of Memory in Korea and China: Remembering the Comfort Women and the Nanjing Massacre," *New Political Science* 30, no. 3 (September 2008): 369–392, doi: 10.1080/07393140802269021; David Hundt and Roland Bleiker, "Reconciling Colonial Memories in Korea and Japan," *Asian Perspective* 31, no. 1 (2007): 61–91; Claudia Schneider, "The Japanese History Textbook Controversy in East Asian Perspective," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, no. 1 (May 2008): 107–122.

[10] Seo, "Politics of Memory in Korea and China"; Jan Sýkora, "Collective (historical) memory and national identity in contemporary Japan: Contested war narrative and myth making in 'Japan's

the other hand, aims to focus on the aftermath of the war and of the dissolution of the Japanese Empire on the Korean Peninsula, and explore the less studied topic of construction of memory related to economic development and economic strategies. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea (or, as they are more colloquially known, North and South Korea), as two of the few remaining "divided nations," present a unique comparative case study of how on opposite sides of the Cold War divide the leadership strived to get rid of colonial legacies and create in the national consciousness a lasting historical myth of the "truly national" character of their countries' economic development.

Economy is considered to be one of the key foundations, "backbones" of any country. In both South and North Korea in the first decades after the liberation from the Japanese colonial rule the leadership attributed extreme importance and paid great attention to the matters related to economic development. In the words of the South Korean leader Park Chung-hee, "in human life, economics precedes politics or culture." He went as far as claiming that "the hope for the wholeness of a nation without its economic independence is literally to look for fish in a forest."[11] His North Korean counterpart Kim Il-sung echoed that sentiment, saying: "If we bow to the hardships and difficulties and fail to reconstruct [the national economy] speedily, we shall be unable to build a prosperous, independent and sovereign country, and our people will be reduced to statelessness once again."[12]

Rapid and successful economic development was in the leaders' eyes necessary not only for purely economic reasons but also for nation-building. It was seen as a means to unify the people and to instill in them a sense of national independence and self-worth damaged during the Japanese occupation and later events.

However, the development of national economy for both countries required a certain degree of Japanese involvement. In North Korea, all the industrial capabilities necessary for building socialism were created during the Japanese colonial period and by the Japanese. For South Korea the matter was less tangible yet arguably trickier: there, the very model of development which the leadership intended to implement was essentially copied from the former metropole.

Longest Day'," *Identity, Culture and Memory in Japanese Foreign Policy*, ed. Michal Kolmaš and Yoichiro Sato (New York: Peter Lang, 2021), 131–146; Szczepanska, *The politics of war memory in Japan*.

[11] Park Chung-hee, *The Country, the Revolution and I* (Seoul: Hollym, 1963), 26–27.

[12] Kim Il-sung, *Works*, vol. 3, *January–December 1947* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981), 48.

The anti-Japanese feelings still ran extremely strong in both countries, to a point where it could possibly endanger the regime. Such, for example, was the case with mass public protests in South Korea in 1964–65, when the talks on normalization with Japan were nearing conclusion. In these circumstances, ensuring public support and shaping public opinion became vital for both the South and the North Korean regimes. The goal was similar for the both of them, but the differences in ideology, political regime and domestic situation determined the variations in the strategies used to shape historical memories. Dependent on circumstances, the leadership chose to mask, downplay, or misrepresent the role of Japan in the countries' development after the liberation.

To explore the formal and informal political practices and empirical spaces states use for citizen-formation, to manage, administer and shape citizens, scholars introduced the concept of pedagogical states.[13] It assesses the state as an "educator" that uses essentially pedagogical means to govern, mold and shape the society. Schools, universities and other institutions within the formal educational system serve as fertile ground and vehicle for the state to achieve that, as they are "designed to induce consent to a dominant political order."[14] However, the pedagogical state policies are not limited to the formal educational framework. Entities existing outside the formal educational system, like news and entertainment media, press, television, channels of elite and popular culture such as advertising, books can also serve as pedagogical sites for the state.[15] Pedagogical power is not repressive in itself; it lies more in the cultural or even ideological domain but it creates conditions for making the citizens governable.[16]

While the concept of pedagogical state is more often applied to countries in the broadly defined Euro-North American area and their development in the recent decades, this article suggests that it can also be extended to Asia and applied to South and North Korea in the Cold War. In their memory formation practices both Koreas acted as pedagogical states, using pedagogic strategies to govern the people, educate them on the state's policies and entrench among them the leadership's chosen position. In the case explored in this article, it was

[13] For more detail on the concept of pedagogical state, see, e.g., Ian Hunter, *Rethinking the school: subjectivity, bureaucracy, criticism* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1994); Sam Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State: Education and the Politics of National Culture in Post-1980 Turkey* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

[14] Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State*, xvii.

[15] Jessica Pykett, "Citizenship Education and Narratives of Pedagogy," in *Governing Through Pedagogy: Re-educating Citizens*, ed. Jessica Pykett (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2012), 5–20.

[16] Ibid., 16.

the position on economic development, its background, trajectories, and Japan's role in it (or lack thereof).

This article focuses primarily on the "outside-the-formal-educational-system" side of pedagogical state in North and South Korea in formation of memory of economic development. The authoritarian political regimes in both countries in the first Cold War decades were conductive to propagation of the sole government position on the issue, expressed in the leaders' public speeches, publications, and through the press. The strong government power and political control over all spheres of life also facilitated distribution of information that the government wanted to distribute to the majority of the population. Since the political systems did not allow for alternative political voices, the words of the leaders can be taken as expressing the official and unified position of the government and state at the time, which they wanted to "teach" to and impose on the society. For that reason, this article bases its analysis primarily on books, articles, and public speeches of the North and South Korean leaders, and on archival sources. Admittedly, there have been discussions on the actual authorship of the speeches and books attributed to Park Chung-hee and Kim Il-sung.[17] Nevertheless, it can be assumed that since the leaders at some point in time made those speeches and authorized the publications in their names, those sources reflect their and the ruling elite's positions, attitudes, and visions for the development of their countries.

This study is, to the best of the author's knowledge, the first to look in detail at the strategies used by South and North Korea in the first Cold War decades to make, or at least make it seem that the economic development after the liberation in 1945 had no ties whatsoever to the former metropole, Japan, and create the historical myth that it was Korean in nature. This article also aims to assess the efficacy of the state policies in the long run, and the role played by nationalism in both cases to help entrench the myth of the "national character" of development in the people's consciousness.

The differences in circumstances of the two countries account for time discrepancies, as for North Korea the formation of the historical myth took place in the second half of the 1940s–1950s, whereas South Korean leadership at that time was preoccupied with other issues. It was not until the early 1960s,

[17] The US officials especially questioned the authorship of Park's "program" book, *The Country, the revolution and I*, published in 1963, saying that it was written not by him but by the intellectuals close to him. See Gregg Andrew Brazinsky, "From Pupil to Model: South Korea and American Development Policy During the Early Park Chung Hee Era," *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 1 (January 2005): 83–115, 87, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-7709.2005.00460.x.

after General Park Chung-hee's successful military coup d'état, that the matters of social perception of development started attracting the government's attention.

South Korea: Omission and Downplaying

General Park Chung-hee came to power in South Korea in 1961 as a result of a military coup, which overthrew the previous legitimately elected government and further unbalanced the already unstable political and economic situation within South Korea. In economic terms, the country was one of the world's poorest at the time. According to the World Bank, in 1961 the per capita GDP in South Korea was below 100 dollars, less than even in some of the newly independent African countries, about 30 times lower than in the US and six times lower than in Japan, the former colonizer.[18] Politically, just the previous year, in 1960, South Korea saw wide-spread protests which resulted in the so-called April revolution ousting the corrupt Syngman Rhee regime. The two aspects combined meant that the position of the new regime was precarious, and it desperately needed to find ways to legitimize itself to the people in order to avoid being overthrown. Providing rapid economic development and high growth rates is often considered to be an effective means to achieve that and to appease the people. However, for rapid economic growth a plan, a strategy of development, was needed.

Park Chung-hee and his advisors were aware of the economic experiences of other developing countries from both sides of the Cold War but had the most knowledge, and even first-hand experience, of the Japanese interwar and post-war economic development. The majority of them grew up and received education under the Japanese rule, either in colonial Korea or in Japan itself. And Park himself, who before the liberation of Korea in 1945 was an officer in the Japanese army, is believed to have embraced the Japanese mentality and approach to matters, including economic development.[19] Given all this, it stands to reason that what came to be the South Korean development model was strongly influenced by, and reminiscent of, the inter- and – even more significantly – post-war Japan, what the scholars have come to call "developmental state."

---

[18] For exact figures, see World Bank National Accounts Data, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=2018&locations=KR&most_recent_year_desc=true&start=1960&view=chart.

[19] Hyung-A Kim, *Korea's Development under Park Chung Hee: Rapid Industrialization, 1961–79* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 16, 20.

The term "developmental state" refers to the model of state-led macroeconomic planning, where the state has considerable power and control over the economy. It was initially conceived to describe Japan's post-World War II economic development and later extended to other East Asian states that followed Japan's example in the second half of the twentieth century, including South Korea. The economists distinguish four key components of the developmental state: high-quality, low-cost meritocratic bureaucracy; a centralized planning agency; authoritarian regime and the right of the government to intervene into market processes; and market-conforming methods of government intervention.[20] All those elements are also characteristic of South Korea's economic model. Some of them already existed in South Korea before 1961, shaped by both traditions and colonial experience, while others were specifically created for the purpose of facilitating the Japanese-style rapid economic development.

Traditionally, in Korea, a Confucian country, education was held in high esteem, and official positions were assigned based on it. Thus, the state officials and public sector workers were generally well-educated. To make the bureaucracy more effective and reduce corruption, shortly after the coup Park Chung-hee initiated a large-scale reshuffle of all government personnel, excluding only those "serving in fields requiring specialized knowledge and experience." The government also invested in training programs to "equip [the government personnel] with development-oriented management techniques." Around the same time, just several months after the coup, the military government established the Economic Planning Board to deal with matters of economic planning. It became "the highest economic planning agency of the government" charged with controlling, supervising, and providing administrative support for the economic development plans.[21] The political regime Park established, with himself at the head and rigorous suppression of any possible opposition, had many commonalities not just with the Liberal Democratic Party regime in post-war Japan, but also with Japan between the wars, of which Park had first-hand knowledge, yet was even more authoritarian. In justification, he claimed that Western European democracy and system of political and economic freedom was "unworkable" for Korea at that time and enjoying "complete political freedom in this

[20] On the concept of developmental state in more detail, see Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925–1975* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1982).

[21] Park Chung-hee, *To Build a Nation* (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis,1971), 126–127.

revolutionary period" did not meet social or political reality or economic needs of the country.[22]

Admittedly, this resemblance could seem like a coincidence or a result of cultural and historical similarities between Korea and Japan, and Park Chung-hee himself never publicly acknowledged it. However, his close associates later recalled that Park had been greatly influenced by Japan. They pointed out that Park's economic and socio-political model was "largely the product of self-taught lessons" based on Japanese inter- and post-war experience.[23] Yet perhaps the most clearly that influence can be seen in the export-oriented character of South Korean development, which was adopted around 1963–1964. In the mid-twentieth century the general consensus among the economists had been that to achieve development and economic autonomy developing countries should adopt import-substituting strategies. Japan in the 1950s was the first country to disregard that advice and introduce export-based externally-oriented development. Thus, as Tadashi Kimiya points out, "one cannot assume that the Park regime would adopt an export-oriented industrialization simply because it was the wisdom of the day" – because it was not.[24] In fact, that decision went against the economic consensus and advice of the USA, South Korea's main ally, and international institutions, but closely followed Japan's example.

However, in the 1960s all matters related to Japan were still a highly sensitive topic with the Korean public, as the memories of the colonial period were still fresh and raw. In such a situation admitting to the public that the economic model proposed by the government as a way to bring the country out of poverty and restore the national pride damaged by colonial period was based on the example of Korea's colonizer and oppressor of 36 years could very well be the downfall of the regime.

For this reason, Park Chung-hee made conscious effort to avoid ever mentioning Japan in connection with South Korean economic development, carefully balancing his speeches. On the one hand, he was basically talking of creating and implementing the elements of the Japanese model: the high-quality, low-cost meritocratic bureaucracy; indicative economic planning, which he was

---

[22] Park Chung-hee, *Our Nation's Path: Ideology of Social Reconstruction* (Seoul: Hollym, 1962), 198–199.

[23] Kim, *Korea's Development under Park Chung Hee,* 20.

[24] Tadashi Kimiya, "The Cold War and the Political Economy of the Park Chung Hee Regime," in *Reassessing the Park Chung Hee Era, 1961–1979: Development, Political Thought, Democracy & Cultural Influence*, ed. Hyung-A Kim and Clark W. Sorensen (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011): 66–84, 67.

very fond of and called an "urgent necessity" for the reasonable allocation of all resources. Private big businesses were to be the leading mechanisms of development. Strong authoritarian government facilitated state interventions into the market structure, extensive mobilization in the social sphere, and export orientation. At the same time, Park carefully did not link any of those features to Japan. Instead, he made it sound as though the external-oriented industrialization and development strategy focusing on exports and based on the elements of the developmental state was created in Korea and specifically for Korea. Publicly, he claimed to derive inspiration from a variety of sources – but not from Japan.

"To prepare [the First Five-Year Economic Development Plan]," Park later said, "the revolutionary government mobilized all the wisdom and knowledge available and set clear goals, the primary goal being to found a self-supporting national economy."[25] Park cited Sun Yat-sen's China, the Mustafa Kemal reforms in Turkey, Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt as cases of successful national and economic restoration. And most frequently he emphasized his admiration of West German post-war development, drawing compelling parallels between South Korea and West Germany. Both countries, he said, were parts of previously unified ones (with their other halves "occupied" by communist forces), destroyed by war, "condemned" to stay non-industrial agricultural nations, which "hardly suited" them. Yet Germany managed to not only overcome the circumstances, but become one of the "mighty economic powers of the world," and so could Korea.[26] In regard to export promotion, he emphasized the necessity of its implementation, saying that rapid increases in production would contribute towards the improvement of living standards, but presented it as the government's invention and initiative for improving the people's standards of living. "Increased production is directly connected with a better life for all of us," said Park Chung-hee, the inaugurated head of the now-civilian government in his address to the nation at the start of 1965.[27]

While he could not completely avoid any mention of Japan, since it played a significant role in South Korea's history and politics, Park Chung-hee repeatedly stressed that he himself, as many Koreans, was anti-Japanese: "I myself would not hesitate to express my indignation with Japan if you asked for my personal feelings about that country. And if you asked me whether I am pro-Japanese or

[25] Park Chung-hee, *To Build a Nation,* 107.
[26] Park Chung-hee, *The Country, the Revolution and I*, 144–151.
[27] Park Chung-hee, *Major Speeches by Korea's Park Chung-Hee.* Compiled by Shin Bum Shik (Seoul: Hollym, 1970), 305.

anti-Japanese, I would choose the latter for my answer."[28] He spoke harshly of the colonial period, a "thirty-six-year-long national degradation" and oppression during which Korea was economically, socially, and politically exploited for the "benefit of Japanese capitalism."[29]

Yet at the same time, Korea desperately needed external funding and assistance for development. In the 1950s it had been provided by the US and the United Nations agencies, but in the 1960s the American policy shifted towards providing assistance to Korea through Japan. That fact forced Park Chung-hee to modify his rhetoric and start trying to convince the public (without alerting it to Japan's role as inspiration for the Korean economic model) that in the face of a new and much more serious threat – communism – the past could be forgiven if Japan made amends for its past aggressions. An important part of these amends would be economic.

Like West Germany in Europe, Japan was expected to provide aid to underdeveloped free nations and to participate in containing communism. Park said that "funds invested by the United States, West Germany, Italy or *even by Japan*" would contribute towards the rapid and successful development of the South Korean economy.[30] He presented it to the public as a compromise: in order to win against communism, Korea needed to align politically, economically and militarily with the "Free World" and Japan as its part. And between communism and normalization with Japan, the latter was the lesser evil. From then onwards, Japan started to appear from time to time in Park's speeches and writings – but only in a context favorable to Korea. For example, he claimed that South Korea's development "compare[d] favorably with the achievements of Germany and Japan."[31] Yet at the same time he never mentioned any resemblance between Japan's and Korea's economic development strategies, not to mention the former being a role model for the latter.

A somewhat similar approach was taken towards the more tangible reminders of the colonial period, the businesses founded under the Japanese rule, with Japanese involvement or influence. They, like the Japanese financial aid, were needed to pioneer and champion economic development, and just as Japan's assistance, were presented to the public as a necessary evil. Despite the fact that Park Chung-hee himself called them "illicit profiteers" and accused them of

[28] Ibid., 39–40.
[29] Park, *Our Nation's Path,* 111–113.
[30] Ibid. Italics added.
[31] Park Chung-hee, *To Build a Nation,* 114.

exploiting the country and the people,[32] they were among those private enterprises that he designated to lead the economic development of the country under the control of the state. In 1961 a number of prominent businessmen were arrested and later released on parole dependent on their willingness to "serve the nation," cooperate with the government, and on their business performance,[33] thus persuading those who had started business under the Japanese during the colonial period to contribute to development. In a sense, the government's policy served as legitimization and rehabilitation for the businesses started under the Japanese rule in the public eye. It made them assist and actively participate in economic rehabilitation and development, reinventing them as truly "Korean" and part of the country's economy.

North Korea: Transforming and Reclaiming

But where South Korea did not have that many businesses that traced back to the colonial days – a lot of the South Korean *chaebol* that became the "engines" of economic growth were founded after the liberation[34] – for North Korea the situation was vastly different. Its entire industrial base, the foundation of the economy, was built during the colonial period under and by the Japanese. On the other hand, it was only the material legacy, not the issue of following the Japanese economic model that the North Korean leadership had to deal with. And that made the topic of Japanese involvement in economic development less tricky for Kim Il-sung than for Park Chung-hee, turning it into a matter of reclaiming the past for North Korea.

For the socialist bloc countries, where the state had tight control over society, shaping social memory and public opinion was to a certain degree easier, yet in their eyes no less important than for those on the other side of the Cold War divide. The socialist leadership, just like their capitalist counterparts, made effort to reconstruct the past in accordance with the new state narratives, redefine historical events, "friends" and "enemies," in order to legitimize the new socialist regimes.[35] And North Korea was no exception. It also, like South Korea, had to

[32] See Park Chung-hee, *The Country, the Revolution and I*.
[33] This episode is described in detail in Kim, *Korea's Development under Park Chung Hee,* 81.
[34] For more detail, see Ŭn-mi Kim, *Big Business, Strong State: Collusion and Conflict in South Korean Development, 1960–1990* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 126.
[35] Holubec and Mrozik, for example, provide a study of this issue in application to Eastern Europe. Stanislav Holubec and Agnieszka Mrozik, *Historical Memory of Central and East European Communism* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

deal with colonial past, but its leader Kim Il-sung chose for that a different strategy than Park Chung-hee. Where Park merely omitted and downplayed the role of Japan, Kim actively attempted to create a new historical myth and entrench it in national consciousness. The ideocratic regime created in North Korea in the 1940s–1960s, where the state essentially equaled the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, facilitated achieving that goal. So did certain policies which were adopted in North Korea after the liberation.

Of the latter, arguably the most important for the purpose of re-establishing the country's economic development as truly 'Korean' was nationalization. Ironically, it was adopted before the foundation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and not by the North Korean government but by the Soviet Civil Administration (1945–1948). The Decree of the Soviet administration from June 19, 1946, stipulated the transfer of all the industries, banks, communications and infrastructure existing in the northern half of the peninsula, as well as of all former Japanese property, into the possession of the Provisional People's Committee when it adopts the nationalization law, which was done in August 1946.[36] To the North Korean public, Kim Il-sung made it sound as though it was done by the Koreans of their own initiative. He proudly called nationalization an element of not only class struggle, as was typical for Marxist rhetoric, but also of national liberation, saying that it deprived the "Japanese imperialists, the pro-Japanese and national traitors" of their economic foothold and enabled the Korean people to reinstate their rightful control over the economy and overthrow the colonial yoke.[37]

Historical experience shows that economic development of the colonies, be it in Africa or Asia, has typically been uneven and dictated not by the requirements or capabilities of the colonized economies, but by the needs of the colonizing powers, and has more often than not been focused on extracting resources.[38] The metropoles developed only those economic areas and industries that were beneficial for their home economies or goals in the colonies, with little concern for balanced development.[39] The case of Japan and the Korean peninsula was not an exception. While in the southern part, with its bigger population and better

[36] Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (hereinafter: AVPRF), Fund 0480, Register 3, Folder 4, File 11, p. 77.

[37] Kim Il-sung, *Tenth Anniversary of the Liberation of Korea. Speech Delivered at the Celebration Meeting of the City of Pyongyang, August 14, 1955* (Pyongyang: "New Korea" Press, 1955), 7.

[38] See e.g., Candice Lee Goucher and Linda Walton, *World History: Journeys from Past to Present* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 675.

[39] The case of British India can be named as one typical example here, with India's economy becoming disbalanced due to its subordination to British economy. See Bipan Chandra, "Colonial India:

climate, the focus was on agriculture and light industry, in the northern part the Japanese focused on mineral resources extraction. Thus, after the liberation and division North Korea was left with mining, heavy and chemical industry, but with underdeveloped agricultural sector and light industry.

Throughout the pre-Korean War and several post-war years, Kim Il-sung repeatedly stressed the lopsided and unbalanced nature of the colonial industrial development and the need to compensate for it. However, looking at what had been done after the liberation, it can be seen that the main focus had been on reconstruction (first after the Japanese, who, retreating, damaged many of the enterprises, then after the Korean War) and enlargement of the existing heavy industry, rather than on remedying its imbalances. Since 1946 and throughout the 1950s Kim Il-sung spoke of the same enterprises, many of which, such as the Hŭngnam Chemical Factory, Hwanghae Ironworks, Suan and Komdok mines, are even now among North Korea's key industrial enterprises. And the development they undertook did not diversify their production; they still focused on extracting natural resources as they had under the Japanese.

For various reasons – part of them financial, part ideological, as it was Kim Il-sung's belief that prioritized development of heavy industry was the road to socialism[40] – not many systemic changes were introduced, and the economic structure continued to reflect its colonial past. However, after the nationalization Kim embarked on a linguistic and much less resource-intensive campaign aimed at 'Koreaifying' the industry, making it domestic at least in the public's perception. This campaign started even before the official foundation of the DPRK, almost straight after the liberation, once Kim was established as the leader of northern Korea.

In the beginning, in 1946–1947, Kim Il-sung did admit that the Japanese had built – although with much "sweat and blood of the Korean people" – the backbone of North Korean economy, the heavy industry, its foundation for development.[41] He stated that the restoration of the enterprises which had been destroyed or damaged by the Japanese retreating from the peninsula would create an ideal base and conditions for fast development.[42]

British versus Indian Views of Development," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 81–167.

[40] Kim Il-sung, *Works*, vol. 17, *January-December 1963* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1984), 323–326.

[41] Kim Il-sung, *Works*, vol. 2, *January-December 1946* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981), 303.

[42] Kim Il-sung, *Works*, vol. 3, 123.

However, it would not do for the independent North Korea to be indebted to its colonial past and owe its economic successes to imperialist aggressors who had been exploiting the Korean people for 36 years. Reflecting this, Kim's rhetoric changed.

In 1948 the restoration of the enterprises and infrastructure damaged by the Japanese retreating from the Peninsula back in 1945, was considered almost completed. However, where a year before it had been considered as solid base for rapid development, now it was no longer viewed as sufficient. "We took over a backward colonial industry from Japanese imperialists, and the factories, mines and other enterprises were skeletonic at that," stated Kim Il-sung in 1948,[43] justifying the push for rapid industrial construction. Thus, the Japanese were downgraded from the builders (if through exploitation and "sweat and blood" of the Korean people) of a strong industrial base suitable for building socialist economy from, to colonial aggressors who could not even create a viable economy and whose faults the North Koreans were now forced to rectify.

Yet another year later, in 1949, and from then onward, Kim Il-sung no longer spoke of the North Korean industries as even having been built by the Japanese. Rather, he proclaimed that they had been merely "owned" or "controlled" by Japan during the colonial period. This gave Kim's audiences a strong (and lasting) impression that the industrial base of the country was inherently "Korean," created by Koreans and for Koreans and merely seized and exploited during the colonial period by the Japanese who had no part in its construction and development.[44]

The entrenchment of the idea that the Japanese had no relation to Korean industries was further sped up by the Korean War. It comes as little surprise that after the war, which had disastrous effects on North Korea and left half the country in ruins, the image of the "Japanese imperialists" was overshadowed and largely replaced by a more serious adversary, the US, both in the people's consciousness and the leaders' speeches. So much so that by the 1960s Kim Il-sung almost ceased to speak of Japan in connection with North Korea's industrial development at all. He only mentioned the "colonial yoke" on occasions such as the National Liberation anniversary, and "American imperialism" in his speeches took up the role previously belonging to "Japanese imperialism." It seems also

[43] Kim Il-sung, *Works*, vol. 4, *January-December 1948* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981), 143.

[44] Kim Il-sung, *Works*, vol. 5, *January-December 1949* (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1981), 141, 345–346.

that by that time he deemed the public sufficiently convinced of the Korean origins of North Korean industrial development.

But re-invention of the past through the leader's speeches and press was not the only technique employed to break up the connection between development and the colonial past. Like many countries throughout history, including the Eastern bloc and the Soviet Union itself, North Korea turned to renaming as part of its historical myth formation. In the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc this usually took the form of assigning cities, streets, landmarks and industrial and infrastructural objects new names in honor of the revolutionary heroes and events.[45] Thus, for example, in line with that idea Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) in the USSR became Leningrad, named after the "leader of world proletariat" Vladimir Lenin; a confectionary factory in Moscow, originally founded by a German entrepreneur, was after the Revolution re-baptized "Red October" in its honor; Bulgarian city of Varna was renamed Stalin to commemorate Joseph Stalin's seventieth anniversary.[46] In Korea as well, under the joint supervision of the Soviet administration in northern Korea and the emerging North Korean authorities, shortly after the liberation the cities, towns, other administrative units, and landmarks were given back their Korean names. They replaced the Japanese versions which had been in use during the colonial period, for example, Pyongyang instead of Heijou or Kaesong instead of Kaijou, the Korean readings of the same hieroglyphic characters. This move literally erased the colonial legacy from the maps, reclaiming cities, villages, landmarks back as Korean.

However, the Soviet administration in 1945–1948 did not go beyond changing the geographical toponyms. So, after the establishment of the DPRK the North Korean authorities had to take the matter into their own hands. Using the experience of "fraternal countries," they extended the renaming campaign to industrial objects created under the Japanese rule. Those factories and plants were given original Korean and suitably revolutionary names to further distance them from their colonial past and make the public think they were wholly Korean. Thus, the Chongjin Ironworks established by Japan's Mitsubishi Corporation became the Kim Chaek Iron and Steel Complex, named after the national resistance activist and Kim Il-sung's comrade-in-arms Kim Chaek. The Kangsŏn Steel Works, one of North Korea's main and largest steel mills, which was constructed

[45] See, e.g., G. R. F. Bursa, "Political Changes of Names of Soviet Towns," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 63, no. 2 (1985): 161–193; Zlatan Krajina and Nebojša Blanuša, eds., *EU, Europe Unfinished: Mediating Europe and the Balkans in a Time of Crisis* (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016).

[46] Though after the denouncement of Stalin's personality cult in 1956 the original name was restored.

and launched into operation under the colonial rule, was turned into the Ch'ŏllima Steel Complex in honor of the Ch'ŏllima movement, a state-sanctioned Stakhanovite movement promoting rapid economic development through the workers' own strength and dedication.

No less peculiar a transformation happened to the Sup'ung dam on the Yalu (Amnok) River on the northern border of North Korea. It was built by the Japanese and using forced Korean labor in the 1930s during the colonial period and at that time was the largest in Asia. Though it did not receive a new name after liberation, the former symbol of Japanese exploitation and oppression was given a new life and meaning as an important part of an independent North Korea's socialist construction. It was included into Kim Il-sung's "Grand Plan to Remake Nature," along with tidelands reclamation, irrigation for agriculture, and rapid increase in electric power production. In an ironic twist, Kim Il-sung's words about the Sup'ung dam echoed the sentiments expressed by the Japanese-language colonial newspaper *Keijō nippō* which after the dam's inauguration stated that "through humanity's power to boldly take on Mother Nature, the Yalu River's eternal flow has been completely subjugated and transformed into electricity, the driving force of modern industry."[47] After the foundation of the DPRK in 1948 the Sup'ung dam, a colonial remain, was made a national emblem, and it is claimed that Kim himself was behind the decision.[48] It is still depicted on the North Korean coat of arms, now symbolizing self-sufficiency in electricity – and not only in electricity, but in politics and economic development as well.

The new names and symbols, backed by the press and the proclamations of the leadership, quickly overshadowed the old, effectively replacing in the people's perception the colonial past with bright revolutionary images.

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Memory Formation Strategies in the Long Run

North and South Korea, two of the few remaining examples of divided nations, provide a useful case study of approaches to forming historical memory in Asia in different political and economic systems, and of the different strategies utilized by the leaders to create an historical myth favorable to the countries' regimes. In South Korea, Park Chung-hee, taking into consideration the strong

[47] Aaron Stephen Moore, "'The Yalu River Era of Developing Asia': Japanese Expertise, Colonial Power, and the Construction of Sup'ung Dam," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, no. 1 (February 2013): 115–139, 115, 132.

[48] Ibid., 132.

anti-Japanese feelings in the country, paid great effort to avoid and omit mentioning Japan in relation to economic development policies. His North Korean counterpart Kim Il-sung also had to deal with the colonial aftermath and Japanese involvement in industrial and economic development. But he, for his part, chose a different strategy and attempted to actively change the social memories and the people's perceptions of industrialization during and after the colonial period.

Two important questions inevitably arise here. First, while in both countries significant effort was put into shaping historical memories of economic development, how effective actually were those efforts and strategies in the long run? And second, what factors contributed to their entrenchment in the people's consciousness?

It comes as little surprise that in the isolated and closed-off North Korea, with the state's and the party's control over all spheres of social life, the effect of state policies was quick and lasting. Already in 1959 the diplomats from the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang on visit to Sunch'ŏn county in central North Korea noted that the administrative and managerial workers on the industries they visited attributed all the successes in industrial reconstruction and development to the party's and personally comrade Kim Il-sung's efforts.[49] They claimed that economic development of the region and the country as a whole only started after the liberation and was made possible by the determination of the people, whereas in fact the county, and the South Pyongan province it is part of, are known for anthracite fields and coal mines which were established and developed under the Japanese colonial rule. Yet no mention of the Japanese, or for that matter the USSR, the PRC and other "fraternal countries" that largely helped to restore the mines and industries after the war, was being made.

Five years later, in 1965, the time by which the state ideology, including approaches to history and economic matters, was all but finalized, Soviet diplomats recounted their trip to South Hamgyŏng province, where they talked to people in cities and at industries. At the Hŭngnam Chemical Fertilizer Complex, the main and largest fertilizer complex in North Korea, initially constructed in the 1920s by the Japanese Nichitsu conglomerate (zaibatsu), the deputy director stressed that the plant was constructed after the Korean War (1950–1953) with "the Korean people's own effort."[50] The factory museum claimed it was built

[49] "A Report on a Visit to Sunch'ŏn County," March 9, 1959, AVPRF, Fund 0102, Register 15, Folder 84, File 34, p. 6.

[50] "A Report on a Visit to South Hamgyŏng Province," March 13, 1965, AVPRF, Fund 0102, Register 21, Folder 106, File 18, p. 1.

under the personal guidance of the great marshal Kim Il-sung, whose decision it was that chemical industry should be developed to improve the lives of the people.

The North Korean press and publications have contributed and continue to contribute to the view that the North Korean economic development is inherently Korean and not linked in any way to the Japanese imperialists and colonial past. For example, the official *History of the Workers' Party of Korea,* published in Pyongyang in 1991, makes no mention of industrialization under the Japanese. Instead it says that in the 1940s the Great Leader Kim Il-sung declared the creation of an independent national economy a priority and mobilized the Party, the workers and the whole people on the struggle for its establishment.[51] It presents the matter as if the development of the northern part of the Korean peninsula started only after the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea there, and under the careful personal guidance of the Great Leader himself.

In contrast to North Korea, in South Korea the fact that the country's development started during the colonial period under the Japanese rule is, while not widely broadcast, also not denied, since that had not been the issue for the regime. The problem lay with the fact that the South Korean development model itself was essentially copied from Japan. During the period of authoritarian rule, from the 1960s till the late 1980s, the state had a great measure of control over what was being said and published in the press and in scholarly research. The South Korean economists, following the state's official position, stated that the Korean development model was unique and truly "national," a successful example of an ingenious model for economic modernization. Instead of admitting its similarities to the Japanese model, they said that the Korean one should be followed by other developing countries striving for economic development.[52] When discussing the concept of developmental state, originally introduced to describe Japan, Japan being the classical example and reference for it, Korean authors, unlike the Western ones, avoided drawing parallels between Korea and Japan and used the term only for Korea. Some even stated that South Korean economic model was closer to the American rather than to the Japanese one, and thus was better.[53]

---

[51] *Chosŏn Rodongdang Ryŏksa* [History of the Workers' Party of Korea] (Pyongyang, 1991), 225–226.

[52] See Chuk Kyo Kim, *Planning Model and Macroeconomic Policy Issues*, vol. 1, *Essays on the Korean Economy* (Seoul: Korea Development Institute, 1977).

[53] E.g., T. W. Kang, *Is Korea the Next Japan? Understanding the Structure, Strategy, and Tactics of America's Next Competitor* (New York and London: Free Press, Collier Macmillan, 1989).

The South Korean government's official position even after the democratization and the shifts of power from right- to left-wing political parties and back again has not changed much. The Internet portal of the National Institute of Korean History, the government organ in charge of promoting the study of historical materials on the history of the country, in the articles related to the economic development of the 1960s does not mention Japan or its role as a model. Instead, it says that it was President Park Chung-hee who created the South Korean "economic miracle."[54] An article in the English-language newspaper *The Korea Times* commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the first five-year economic development plan states that "it is hard to believe that Korea embarked upon an outward-looking and export-oriented economic development strategy in the early 1960s amid the then-prevalent inward-looking development doctrine of backward nations."[55] According to it, "there were a few exceptions – Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong," with no mention of Japan, despite it being the first to implement export-oriented industrialization strategy back in the 1950s, before all the others. And while there are those that point out that the South Korean model was, in fact, an emulation and imitation of the Japanese one,[56] that is arguably still not the dominant point of view in South Korea.

Factors of Success

Thus, it can be concluded that in both North and South Korea the governments in the first Cold War decades succeeded in shaping the historical memories of economic development as inherently Korean in character and nature. Moreover, the effect of the state policies was lasting in both countries, despite the differences in their circumstances. This leads us to the second question posed at the start of the previous section: what were the reasons for such efficacy?

Arguably, this was due to a combination of factors. In North Korea, the autarkic nature of the state and its basically totalitarian regime with control over all spheres of life essentially not allowing any alternation from the established state narrative ensured that the effect of the state policies of memory formation was lasting. The South Korean case up till the 1980s and democratization and

[54] National Institute of Korean History, June 15, 2020, http://www.history.go.kr/.
[55] Choong-yong Ahn, "First Five-Year Economic Plan of Korea," *The Korea Times*, November 25, 2012, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/biz/2013/08/602_125468.html.
[56] E.g., Tae-dong Kim et al., *Pijŏngsang Kyŏngje Hoedam* [Non-Summit Economic Talks] (Seoul: Oktang Buksŭ, 2019).

the end of military regimes was not completely different. The strong authoritarian military governments could successfully suppress opposition and control what was being said within the country. But with time, given the country's openness and inclusion into the world affairs, the public's access to information also broadened.

Yet apart from political factors, there was another one, more ideological and notably common for both North and South Korea – nationalism. As Benedict Anderson rightly states, nationalism, "nation-ness," is a feature of both capitalist and socialist states, and since the end of World War II every successful revolution defined itself in national terms, legitimizing itself through the sense of social unity and "nation-ness."[57] The socioeconomic and political changes that occurred in North and South Korea in the first post-liberation decades were broad and fundamental enough in their scale and impact to deserve to be called revolutionary.[58] The changes in North Korea after liberation especially have been labelled as a "revolution" in scholarship[59]; and the military government that came to power in South Korea in 1961, itself considered its coup d'état a revolution (and even a "national" revolution), which is reflected even in the name of one of the "program" books by the coup's leader Park Chung-hee, *The Country, the Revolution and I*. Nationalism has been an important factor in the formation of social consciousness and state ideology in both North and South Korea.

The rise of nationalistic feelings on the (then unified) Korean Peninsula is often traced back to the late nineteenth century and the forceful opening of Korea by foreign powers. But undoubtedly the major contribution to their development was made by Japanese colonial domination and great power intervention and division that followed it. Throughout modern history Korean nationalism has been aimed at the outside, against external actors and encroachment on Korea's sovereignty, self-sufficiency, and autonomy.[60] It has also been centered around ethnic, rather than civic, principles, contributed to by the fact that Korea has historically been a monoethnic country, and focused on restoring in the people the sense of national confidence and self-worth. As Brian Myers claims, "paranoid, race-based nationalism," rather than communism or Marxism-Leninism,

---

[57] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2–4.

[58] See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) for a detailed discussion on social transformation and social revolutions.

[59] See, e.g., Suzy Kim, *Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

[60] Seo-Hyun Park, "Dueling nationalisms in North and South Korea," *Palgrave Communications* 5 (2019), article no. 40, doi: 10.1057/s41599-019-0248-3.

lies at the base of North Korean state ideology.[61] Details can be disputed, but it is undeniable that indeed nationalism has almost from the start of the North Korean state played a major role in it, in all spheres of its life including ideology, politics and economy.

In South Korea as well nationalism has been an instrumental feature of nation-building from the very first years, when not only the economy, but national consciousness also required reconstruction and restoration, and independence not just from Japan but from the United States as well.[62] The ideological "decolonization" and re-establishment of the sense of national pride and self-worth in the people was in the leadership's eyes necessary for successful development of the country. Park Chung-hee lamented that before his "national revolution," the South Koreans "had lacked a true sense of independence," of national pride,[63] and his government actively propagated and encouraged nationalist feelings in the people.

While they have diminished since the Cold War, nationalist feelings are still strong in the present-day South Korean society.[64] They are fueled by the unforgotten memories of the colonial past that still complicate relations with Japan. And while South Korea, unlike the North, re-established diplomatic relations with Japan back in 1965, unresolved issues such as forced mobilization and military prostitution during war-time continue to mar them.[65] It is also reflected in the public opinion of Japan. According to polls, even now, more than 70 years after the end of the colonial period, over 60 percent of South Koreans have a negative attitude towards Japan.[66] This creates a fertile ground for nationalist feelings and fuels the desire to prove that Korea's successes have no ties to the former aggressor and colonizer.

---

[61] Brian Myers, *The Cleanest Race: How North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2011), 16.

[62] Park, "Dueling nationalisms in North and South Korea." As for the US, it, while not strictly a colonizer, has been an occupying power after the liberation from Japan, the superpower with influence on the domestic policies, and still maintains military presence in South Korea. All of this led to dual feelings of dependence and resentment towards the US.

[63] Park Chung-hee, *The Country, the Revolution and I,* 167.

[64] See, e.g., Gi-wook Shin, "'Kuksujuŭijŏk p'op'yullijŭmt'e pumerang mannŭnda" [The Perils of Populist Nationalism], *Shindonga*, August 19, 2019, https://shindonga.donga.com/List/3/all/13/1819513/1.

[65] See, e.g., Eun A Jo, "Japan and South Korea Are Still Haunted by the Past. Confronting a Legacy of Forced – and Failed – Reconciliation," *Foreign Affairs*, November 23, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/japan/japan-and-south-korea-are-still-haunted-past.

[66] East Asia Institute, *Korea-Japan (East Asia) Public Opinion Survey 2021*, http://www.eai.or.kr/main/english/program_view.asp?intSeq=20810&code=54&gubun=program.

Seo-Hyun Park notes another trait of Korean nationalism, present in both Koreas, which facilitated formation of historical memory of economic development and the longevity of the created historical myth. It is the desire to achieve economic prosperity and become advanced and developed like the great powers, but without revering them. This further explains, on the one hand, the necessity of concealing the role of Japan in economic development of the two Koreas after the liberation, and on the other hand also the long-lasting effect of the state's efforts to shape social memories that can be seen decades after the initial stages of economic development. The leaderships' memory policies were perhaps so efficient because they gave the people what they wanted and needed to hear and believe in the times of nation-building: the image of a strong, independent, and self-sufficient country that can achieve prosperity on its own, by its own effort.

Conclusion

In both South and North Korea in the first decades after the liberation from the Japanese colonial rule the matters related to economic development were at the forefront of the governments' agenda. The leadership of both countries was preoccupied not only with the actual issues of development, such as investment, resource allocation, or trade balance, or with drawing up economic strategies and plans; it was also concerned with how the economic development was perceived by the public. The issue lay with the fact that to a certain extent the economic development of both countries was tied to Korea's former colonizer, Japan. Memories of the colonial period and of Japanese aggression were still fresh, so the leaders of the two Korean states needed to "divorce" their countries' development from any connections to Japan in the people's consciousness.

This article aimed to analyze the set of mechanisms behind the formation of national identity through the economic agenda in North and South Korea in the first Cold War decades. In their memory policies, both countries acted as pedagogical states, using pedagogic strategies to govern the people, educate them on the state's policies and entrench among them the leadership's chosen position. While the goal of creating the myth of the truly national character of economic development was common for both countries, the means of achieving it differed. In South Korea, President Park Chung-hee in the 1960s paid great effort to avoid and omit mentioning Japan in relation to economic development policies. In the North, his counterpart Kim Il-sung took a different path, attempting to actively change the historical memory through replacing Japan's economic role

the people's perceptions of industrialization during and after the colonial period with the role of the Party and of the North Korean people.

However, as this article aimed to draw attention to, there were not only differences, but also similarities in the South and North Korean approaches, positions, situations, and the results of their efforts to shape historical memory of economic development. Looking at the present-day situation and accounting for differences in regime and circumstances, it appears that the efforts put forward by the South and North Korean leaders to shape historical memory and create the myth that economic development of the two Korean states in the post-liberation decades was Korean in nature and had no ties to the former metropole, Japan, have paid off in both cases. In both countries the effect of memory policies turned out to be long-lasting, reaching even into the present day not only in the closed-off North Korea, but also in the developed and democratized South Korea.

There were several factors that contributed to the success of the memory policies in both countries. Strong authoritarian (if not to say dictatorial) political regimes in both of them at the time of the intensive formation of memory facilitated the entrenchment in society of the leadership's position on economic development. At the same time, the assessment of the economy and economic development as truly Korean with no connection to Japan corresponded to the people's aspirations for a strong, independent and economically self-sufficient Korea. Thus, economic development (or at least its interpretation) has become a fundamental factor in building of national myths, and contributed to the rise of nationalism and nationalistic feelings which, in turn, helped entrench the leadership's position on economic development as the dominant one in society.

Thus, research shows that the matter of economic development can also be a part of memory formation and memory politics, and that for communist states, in this case North Korea, the formation of historical memory was just as important as for capitalist ones like South Korea.