



TCS LOUPE

PROCESSES OF REFORM AND OPENING-UP IN CHINA, JAPAN AND KOREA



SPECIAL LECTURE

**Understanding
the Differences:
The Processes
of Reform and
Opening-up,
Cultures and
Value Systems
of China, Japan
and Korea**

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Delivered by
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LECTURE SUMMARY

Understanding the Differences: The Processes of Reform and Opening Up, Cultures and Value Systems of China, Japan and Korea

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My Understanding of Korea, China and Japan

Examining South Korea (hereinafter Korea), China and Japan in an objective way is difficult yet not impossible. When I was working on my comic series *Far Countries, Near Countries*, I put a great deal of effort in maintaining an objective perspective about my home country, Korea, and its neighbors, Japan and China.

To avoid the influence of national sentiment toward Japan, I visited the country for more than 50 times, sharing in-depth talks with my Japanese friend who used to study together in Germany. On the other hand, many Koreans do not have detailed knowledge about China's modern history due to the severance of diplomatic relations between the two countries before the 1990s. Thus I had studied intensively about the country while creating a series of comic strips about China on *JoongAng Ilbo* for 2 years.

Based on these experiences to understand the three countries, I would like to share my knowledge about the different processes of reform and opening-up reflected on cultures and value systems of the three countries.

Landscape of the Contemporary World

Let's first examine changing landscape of the contemporary world. If one examines the leading countries of the 20th century, they have one thing in common; those countries had successfully gone through unification and reform during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The power of the U.S. started to rise after the 1861-65 Civil War when the federation was unified by President Lincoln. Soviet Union also established a Socialist nation by 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Moreover, Japan went through the Meiji Restoration in 1868, and Germany achieved Bismarck unification in 1871.

Many of those leading countries of the 20th century are now facing hardships. The U.S. now draws much criticism by other nations for arrogantly pursuing its hegemony. Soviet Union was collapsed in the early 1990s due to its extreme idealism and Japan is experiencing a long period of economic recession of 'Lost Two Decades'.

On the other hand, there are rising nations of the 21st century which have accomplished rapid economic and social growth. Korea has achieved both economic development and democratization, with its GDP per capita grew from 67 USD in 1953 to 25,000 USD in recent years. It is also the first country which transitioned from an aid recipient to a donor. China's economic development accelerated under Deng Xiaoping's leadership after the 1978 reform and the country has emerged as the G2 in line with the U.S. Germany is the only exception of the leading countries of the 20th century whose economy remains stable and competitive even in the recent European economic crisis.

Different Mindsets of East and West and the Clash of the Two Civilizations

The British philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell contrasted different mindsets of East and West. According to Russell, the sources of Western mindset are represented by Plato, the Old Testament, and Galileo. Plato symbolizes the 'ego-centric' Greek culture and the Old Testament represents Jewish religion and

ethics based on the ‘absolute’ God. Galileo stands for the modern industrialism. Western mindset influenced by the three elements conveys the concept of the absolute, singular entity without any compromise or coexistence, which provided the motive for the imperialism and colonialism.

On contrast, Eastern mindset is influenced by the three sources symbolized as Lao-Tzu, Confucius and Buddha. Lao Tzu represents the unity of men and heaven, Confucius the harmony of the society, and Buddha the contemplation of the afterlife.

Table 1. Sources of Eastern and Western Mindsets defined by Bertrand Russell

East		West	
Lao Tzu	Unity of men and heaven	Plato	Ego-centric Greek culture
Confucius	Harmony of the society	Old Testament	Jewish religion and ethics based on the absolute God
Buddha	Contemplation of the afterlife	Galileo	Modern industrialism

This fundamental difference between the two mindsets led to the clash of East and West. The West started to overtook the East from the 18th century along with the development of Western capitalism and democracy. The rise of the West stimulated colonial expansion around the globe and Korea, China and Japan all confronted the threat of the Western imperialism. In fact, the three countries’ responses to this historical upheaval were very different from one another.

China’s Reform and Opening-Up: *Zhong Ti Xi Yong*

China faced growing necessity for reform after the two Opium wars in 1840 and 1861 and attempted to transform the society by accepting western knowledge and technology. The idea of *Zhong Ti Xi Yong* (中体西用) served as the guiding

principle of China's reform, which referred to studying western science and technology under Chinese traditional culture. The reform resulted in failure because the Chinese traditional notion of empire and Sinocentrism worked as both cultural and ideological barriers against the change. The country as a result suffered from the imperialist encroachment until the mid 20th century.

The preservation of unique self-identity now provides momentum for China's future development. Under the leadership of Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping, China has modified democracy (Mao's concept of 'New Democracy') and capitalism (the concept of 'Socialist Capitalism') distinguished from those of the West by reflecting country's situation.

Japan's Reform and Opening-Up: *Datsua Nyuo* and *Wakon Yosai*

As an island country, Japan has long been survived through accepting and modifying cultures of other nations; Japan invented its writing system of *kana* by transforming Chinese characters and abbreviates English words in its own terms as in *rajikase* (radio cassette). Japanese culture can be characterized in terms of *wa* (和, harmony), *on* (恩, favor), and *meiwaku* (迷惑, trouble). Japanese clearly delineate borders between one and others to maintain the harmony. Crossing the border may cause trouble to others, and one must return the favor.

Japan also realized the necessity for reform after witnessing China's defeat at the Opium Wars. Through the Meiji Restoration in 1868, it drastically changed its social system. Not only did Japan establish direct imperial rule but renovated its education, military and religious system by incorporating best practices of the West. The idea of *Datsua Nyuo* (脱亜入欧, Leaving Asia, Entering the Europe) and *Wakon Yosai* (和魂洋才 Japanese spirit and Western techniques) were prevalent notions of the time.

Japan's bold reform and open policy enabled the rise of the country as one of the strong nations in the 20th century. Yet such drastic Westernization of *Datsua Nyuo* and *Wakon Yosai* is facing challenges in the 21st century when the importance of

cultural identity and creativity is growing. The waning of the dominance of the Western culture entrusted Japan with a task of finding new momentum for change and growth.

Korea's Reform and Opening-Up: *Global-Mix*

Before getting into Korea's case, let's first talk about why *Psy's* music video *Ganam Style* suddenly became a global fad. The most critical reason is the rise of Korea's national image over the last 70 years; rapid growth of such big enterprises as *Samsung* and *Hyundai*, and remarkable achievements at the Olympic (4th in 1988 Seoul Olympics and 5th in 2012 London Olympics) and World Cup Games (4th in 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup) all contributed to the enhancement of its national image. It is the secret behind the Korean Wave which is thriving under the dominance of American Pop Culture around the world.

The global popularity of Korean Popular Culture was influenced by the mentality created through its unique process of reform and opening up. Korea was relatively free from the dominance of the Western imperialism because of the Japanese occupation. In fact, Korean people protected its ethnic and cultural identity even amongst the colonial rule. It was after the liberation in 1945 when the surge of Western influence began in earnest. Western culture was actively introduced as an object of adoration because the West contributed to the liberation of the country from the colonial occupation and protected it from the communist threat.

As a result, Korea accepted Western culture in its intact form while maintaining the nation's unique cultures and values. This resulted in the creation of the *Global-Mix* mentality, where both Eastern and Western values are coexisting. Thus, Korea freely comes back and forth between the cultures of the East and West producing cultural contents that appeal to various regions around the world. Korea must strive hard for the social integration in order to maintain its momentum for change.

Q&A

1. China now adheres to the principle of 'One Country, Two Systems'. What is the gist of the Chinese identity as 'One Country'?

The gist of Chinese identity is Sinocentrism, which indicates everything that is Chinese. It conveys the pride of a China as state and nation. The concept puts emphasis on Han Chinese yet its ideological scope has been expanded to encompass the 55 minorities.

In order to understand Sinocentrism, we need first to know the tribute system. Whereas Westphalia system of the West established in 1648 assumes 1 to 1 correspondence between nations in diplomatic relationship and trade, China's tribute system identifies concept of family with the relationships among nations. This organic relationship among different nations is the essence of the Chinese identity.

2. Under the global rise of the rightwing political parties in the recent years, the trilateral cooperation seems to lose its momentum. What is your thought on this?

It is the dilemma of the three countries. The rise of the rightwing political parties demonstrates the global tendency where each country focuses more on protecting its self-interest. Yet we must cooperate with one another in this

globalized world. Shrewd diplomacy is required to pursue the trilateral cooperation while resolving political and historical conflicts.

3. How can Korea contribute to the trilateral cooperation?

Korea needs to maintain balanced relationship among the four strong surrounding nations of the U.S., Japan, China and Russia to pursue country's unification. Different from Germany which had been separated into different states before 1871, two Koreas had long lived as one unified nation for around 1300 years. Considering national sentiment and historical experience, it is highly likely that Korea will be unified someday. Thus Koreans need to prepare for the unification, and in this sense, the country must become stronger and strive hard to draw support from the international society for the unification.

SPECIAL LECTURE AT A GLANCE

Characteristics of Reform and Opening-Up of China, Japan and Korea

Country	Feature of Reform	Description
China	<i>Zhong Ti Xi Yong</i> (中体西用)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'studying western science and technology under Chinese traditional culture' - Chinese traditional notion of empire and Sinocentrism worked as both cultural and ideological barriers against the change - Preservation of unique self-identity
Japan	<i>Datsua Nyuo</i> (脱亜入欧) <i>Wakon Yosai</i> (和魂洋才)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Leaving Asia, Entering the Europe' (Datsua Nyuo) and 'Japanese spirit and Western techniques' (Wakon Yosai) - Meiji Restoration (1868): Establishment of direct imperial rule & renovation of social systems - Drastic Westernization facing challenges in the 21st century, the era of cultural identity and creativity
Korea	Global-Mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relatively free from the dominance of the Western imperialism in the early 20th century - Protection of ethnic and cultural identity - Active introduction of the Western culture after 1945 as an object of adoration - Global-Mix mentality with the coexistence of both Eastern and Western values



President RHIE Won Bok of Duksung Women's University is a prominent cultural figure in Korean society well-known for the steady & best-selling cartoon series, *Far Countries, Near Countries*. The book has long been a guide for Korean people to get to know diverse countries around the world including China, Japan, U.S. and Netherlands, among others.

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