

# Who is Optimistic about an East Asian Community?:

Public Attitudes toward an EAC in South Korea\*

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## Abstract

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Much of the research on a potential East Asian Community focuses on possible norms and institutions, downplaying the importance of public opinion. This study focuses specifically on how the Korean public views the prospects for an EAC at an individual level. Using data from a 2013 survey, I investigate three hypotheses related to economic interdependence, security concerns, and cultural similarity taken from previous research in the European Union and apply them to the situation of Korea. Three additional hypotheses related to national identity, the generational gap and historical issues are also included to reflect the particular context of Korea. Statistical results reveal that, all things being equal, national identity, the perceived cultural similarity between countries and awareness of historical issues have an impact on attitudes towards the establishment of an EAC. It is also found that the democratization generation is less likely to be optimistic about an

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EAC, while the post-politicization generation, especially those in their twenties, is more likely to be positive about the future prospects of such a community.

**Keywords:** East Asian Community, Regional Community, Public Attitudes.

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## I . Introduction

Regional integration and the creation of regional communities beyond the borders of nation-states have become an important political and economic issue following a number of significant global events that have occurred since the 1990s, including the spread of globalization, the end of the Cold War, and the rise of China. Above all, the establishment of the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) allowed regionalism to be recognized as a viable pursuit. East Asian countries thus sought to adapt to these new circumstances by fostering regionalism in East Asia, especially in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997.

However, many obstacles exist to the establishment of a regional community in East Asia; these include the historical legacy of Japanese imperialism, the lack of a regional identity, and differences in economic size, development and systems between East Asia countries (Katzenstein 2000; Yoon 2010). Indeed, historical issues such as the content of history textbooks, the treatment of comfort women, visits to Yasukuni Shrine, and territorial disputes surrounding

Dokdo/Takeshima and Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands have been the center of attention in Northeast Asia in the 2000s, increasing distrust and tension in this region.

Though political attempts to establish an East Asian regional community is currently at a standstill, transnational exchanges within this area are increasingly common for regular citizens. Intra-East Asian trade is increasing rapidly and a tremendous number of people are crossing international borders for the purpose of tourism, business, employment, marriage, and education. In 2013, about 90 percent of Korean emigrants moved to somewhere in the East Asian region, and about 80 percent of resident aliens in Korea were from East Asia (Korea Immigration Service 2013). The ratio of intra-regional trade among the ASEAN+3 countries increased from 28.6 percent in 1990 to 39.7 percent in 2010, which is a rate comparable with NAFTA (Yoon 2012). In addition to this, the trade among Korea, China and Japan has steadily increased since the 1990s, with China's entry into the WTO accelerating this rise. As of 2010, trade between these three countries accounts for approximately 22 percent of international trade (Kim 2012).

Given the increase in transnational exchange within East Asia and the knowledge of regional integration in Europe and North America, what does the Korean public think about a potential East Asian Community (EAC)?<sup>1)</sup> Although the establishment of a regional

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1) Established or potential communities in the Asian region currently include APEC, ASEAN, and ASEAN+3. Any future EAC could be developed from one of these or could be founded as a completely new model. Thus, I do not offer a precise description of what a future EAC would consist of, but instead use the phrase to

community is driven by politicians, it is important to identify public attitudes toward any future EAC because this process is dependent on the public's democratic control over the elected officials who are responsible for international relations within the East Asian region (Gabel & Palmer 1995). It was, for example, the voting on the Maastricht Treaty by the Danish, Irish and French that most affected the course of the European Union (Eichenberg & Dalton 1993, 508). In that sense, public opinion regarding regional integration in East Asia will indicate to some extent the pace of any move towards an EAC in the near future.

While few would insist that the formation of a regional community can be pushed ahead on public opinion alone, even fewer would agree that it plays no role in the process. Despite the importance of public opinion, however, there have been few empirical and systematic analyses of public attitudes in Korea toward the idea of a regional community. Because previous research has mainly been limited to normative and theoretical perspectives (Na 2009; Moon & Seo 2010; Park 2011; Kim 2006), it is difficult to understand the attitudes toward an EAC among the public. As a result, this research focuses specifically on public attitudes regarding the prospects for an EAC at the individual level. I review the factors that affect popular attitudes toward the regional community in reference to previous research on

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loosely describe a regional community centered on Korea, China and Japan and including countries in East Asia. Above all, as this article aims to examine public attitudes toward a future EAC, a specific definition of an EAC is not helpful for gauging public opinion or sentiment. In the survey, respondents are simply told that an EAC refers to a regional community similar to the EU.

European integration and in consideration of the Korean context.

The question I pose in this article is what determines Korean citizens' attitudes toward an EAC. I answer this question on two levels by modeling the factors that influence public attitudes toward an EAC using cross-sectional survey data. First, I test the generalizability of several hypotheses drawn from previous research on the determinants of public support for regional integration in Europe. In this regard, I focus on the impact of three variables based on a neo-functionalist theory related to economic interdependence, a realist theory related to security concerns and a culturalist theory grounded in the cultural identities and homogeneity of East Asia. On the second level, I consider the particular context of South Korea in the formation of public opinion on regional integration. For this, I review the effects of strong nationalism, historical issues and the distinct change in intergenerational values.

This research represents both a theoretical and an empirical contribution to the study of public sentiment toward regional integration. Most importantly, by identifying the dynamics of the public view on an EAC, it provides a guide for the establishment of an EAC in the near future. The major findings are as follows. First, opinions on a prospective EAC among Korean people are affected more by cultural factors than by economic and security factors. Second, after controlling for other variables, it is found that the more pride someone takes in being Korean, the more optimistic they are about an EAC. Third, the generational factor has a strong effect on attitudes toward an EAC; in particular, the post-politicization

generation in their twenties is 2.4 times more optimistic than other generations. Finally, the more important people consider historical issues to be, the less optimistic they are about an EAC.

This article proceeds in the following manner. The section that follows presents a theoretical overview, from which I draw empirically testable hypotheses. I then turn to a description of the survey data on which this analysis is based. The fourth section presents the descriptive statistics for the study, and the fifth section focuses directly on the determinants of citizen attitudes toward an EAC at the individual level. In the concluding section, the empirical findings and their implications for our understanding of public support for an EAC are discussed.

## II . Theoretical considerations and hypotheses

This article aims to uncover the factors determining public attitudes toward a regional community and regional integration at the individual level, focusing on six theoretical explanations in particular. I choose these because they offer generalizable hypotheses drawn from previous studies on the European regional community on the one hand and because they highlight the particular context of South Korea on the other. A brief description of these six explanations is presented below.

## Economic interdependence

Economic factors are arguably the most often cited explanation for Europeans' attitudes toward regional integration. Early studies, such as Haas and Deutsch, demonstrated that the spread of economic interdependence would allow a regional community to be realized (Haas 1958; Deutsch 1969). In short, as transnational activities increase, transnational networks expand and institutional norms are established. This can be also applied at the individual level. Some integration theorists have suggested that economic interdependence between countries can promote public support for a regional community (Nye 1971; Keohane & Nye 1975). It has been confirmed that the level of intra-EC trade relative to a nation's total trade is strongly related to public evaluations of the community (Eichenberg & Dalton 1993, 523).

This logic can be translated into the expectation that positive attitudes toward a regional community should vary with the degree of economic interdependence with possible major membership states. Therefore, I expect that the more one perceives major countries in East Asia as being economically interdependent, the more likely one is to be optimistic about the establishment of an EAC (Hypothesis 1).

## Security concerns

It is important to remember that the building of the European Community was not motivated exclusively by economic and utilitarian concerns. Two world wars increased the public's concern

over national security and sparked a desire for peace. In this regard, past research has found that support for the European Community is a function of perceived security in relation to East-West tension; support for the EC fell at the time of growing East-West conflict and rose as this conflict weakened (Eichenberg & Dalton 1993, 515; Rajmaira & Ward 1990).

On this basis, I assume that attitudes toward an East Asian regional community become less optimistic as security concerns increase. Although the East and the West are no longer engaged in a cold war, tension is mounting within East Asia, caused by China's widening military influence, Japan's potential rearmament, and North Korea's incessant nuclear threats. As military tension rises, Koreans are less likely to appreciate the economic benefits of regional integration due to security concerns, which would weaken support for an EAC. In other words, if the Korean public is concerned about the regional instability generated by the military actions of China and Japan, I expect that they will be less optimistic about an EAC (Hypothesis 2).

### Cultural similarity

For a community to function smoothly and remain viable in the long term, it needs to establish a sense of identity, and in this culture plays a significant role. The European Community was established in the interest of economy and security, but at the same time sought to develop a cultural identity and homogeneity, which eventually led to the European Union. Some scholars have suggested that

Euroscepticism, which has been on the rise since the 2004 EU expansion, is a result of the EU's increased cultural and religious diversity and the challenges inherent in establishing a shared sense of political community (Fligstein 2008; Risse 2010; Klingemann & Weldon 2013). Inglehart also proposed that a shared cultural legacy and a country's level of economic development were sources of mutual trust in transnational societies like the EU (Inglehart 1990).

Debates on East Asia's cultural identity appeared in the process of economic growth of newly industrialized countries (NICs) in the 1980s and in the rise of China since the 1990s. Advocates claimed that East Asia had social and cultural value distinguishable from that of the West, which enabled East Asia to follow a unique developmental pathway. In that sense, cultural identity or homogeneity was thought to provide the momentum for building a regional community (Yoo 1997; Ham 1999). This explanation can also be applied at an individual level. I therefore hypothesize that the stronger their feeling that East Asian countries share a similar culture, the more optimistic an individual will be of the EAC (Hypothesis 3).

### **National identity**

National identity has been considered incompatible with a transnational regional identity. In particular, it had been concluded that a strong national identity would make it difficult to form a European identity (Smith 1992, 1995). However, another survey has indicated that European identity does not replace nor compete with

national identity. Belot reported that younger people who have a positive image of their own country find it easier to identify with Europe than those who do not (quoted from Jiménez 2004a). This compatibility is because European identity is instrumental while national identity is more ethnic-cultural (Jiménez 2004b, 12). This suggests that a strong national identity does not work against building a transnational community.

Koreans take great pride in their national identity, and this strong nationalism makes forming a regional identity and building regional cooperation difficult (Lincoln 2004; Rozman 2004). National sentiment triggered by recent conflict over historical events and territorial disputes between Korea, China and Japan have led to uncomfortable Northeast Asian relations. In that sense, it is necessary to empirically test the extent to which national identity affects the prospects for the establishment of an EAC. I expect that those with a strong national identity will be less optimistic about an EAC than those with a weaker sense of nationalism (Hypothesis 4).

### Generation Gap

The members of each generation have in common a cognitive attitude as a result of sharing historical experiences, and rapid social and cultural changes facilitate the formation of a generation (Mannheim 1952). Historical events such as Japanese colonialism, the Korean War, industrialization in the 1960-70s, democratization in the 1980-90s, and post-politicization since the 2000s have enabled

Koreans to form distinctive generations. Furthermore, Koreans undergoing 'compressed modernization' over a short period of time demonstrate a generational gap and the conflict over values it prompts (Inglehart & Welzel 2005; Chang 2010).

In this paper, I categorize Korean generations into the pre-liberation, democratization and post-politicization generations. The pre-liberation generation, experiencing Japanese colonial rule and the Korean War, has strong national feelings and takes great pride in a developed Korea. The democratization generation, commonly referred to as the 386 generation, expanded the idea of democracy, while at the same time promoting unification and anti-American sentiment. Members of the post-politicization generation, born in the mid-1980s when economic growth in Korea was in full swing, spent their teenage years enjoying advanced information technology and witnessing globalization. In contrast with the two previous generations, this generation is individualistic and not ideological, with openness to other nations and weak nationalism. We may expect that, because each generation experiences a distinct political, social, and economic environment, their attitudes towards the likelihood of an EAC will differ (Hypothesis 5).

### **Historical Issues**

Countries within a region share both time and space. Shared time is composed of interchange and cooperation, but also of conflict, enmity, and war. The memory of violence inevitably frozen during the

Cold War period began to thaw in the 1990s, following inter-state disputes regarding historical issues. This is a worldwide phenomenon, but East Asia experienced this more intensely than most other areas.

There are sharp disagreements between Korea and Japan, between Japan and China, and between China and Korea regarding the interpretation of historical issues and apologies for historical events such as the Japan's annexation of Joseon, the forced mobilization of comfort women, the Nanjing Massacre, Japan's history textbooks, and China's distortion of Goguryeo and Balhae history. These historical controversies affect national politics, as well as the perceptions of other countries held by individuals. Therefore, I expect that if people consider historical issues to be serious, they will be less optimistic about an EAC (Hypothesis 6).

### III. Data

In order to investigate the hypotheses discussed above, I use questions from the "Survey on Koreans' perception of East Asia" which was conducted by the East Asia Institute in 2013. The survey was conducted between March 27 and April 5, 2013, with a total sample of 1,004 respondents. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in Korean with a structured questionnaire. The sample aimed to be nationally representative of adults nineteen years of age or older. Respondents were randomly chosen from among the administrative divisions based on age and gender distributions

generated from the 2013 Korean Resident Registration Census. Poststratification weights were applied based on region, gender, and age.

The dependent variable in this analysis is individual-level optimism about a potential EAC. This variable is constructed from responses to the question, “Generally speaking, do you think building an East Asian community similar to the European Union is realizable?” This survey did not directly ask respondents to indicate their support for an EAC because an EAC was not in the process of being established. The addition of ‘similar to the European Union’ to the question was in consideration of the fact that the general public would not have been aware of the scope of an EAC nor any concrete standards regarding its operation. In total, 44% of the respondents chose ‘I don’t know,’ suggesting that the Korean public is indifferent to the idea of an EAC. However, at the time of the interviews, the prospect of an EAC was no longer a major political issue widely reported in the media. In fact, formal discussion of an EAC had all but disappeared from political circles.

Optimism about an EAC is coded 1 if a respondent thinks that, taking everything into consideration, the establishment of an EAC is possible, 0 if it is impossible. Coding 1 for possible, 0 for otherwise (impossible and ‘I don’t know’ together) was also an option, one that would maximize sample size. However, given that it is important to clearly differentiate pessimism from optimism, I removed ‘I don’t know’ responses from the analysis, reducing the sample size. These two coding options made little difference to the overall results, except

within the democratization generation.

The explanatory variables in this analysis are designed to test the hypotheses discussed above. Economic interdependence is measured based on the response to the question "Generally speaking, to what extent you think two countries are economically interdependent?" Responses are measured on a eleven-point scale (0=very low; 10=very high). Security concern is based on the question "Generally speaking, do you think Japan's militarism will return soon?" and "Generally speaking, do you think China will search for hegemony in the region of East Asia?" These questions were coded from 1 (not very worried) to 10 (very worried). Cultural similarity is measured with "Generally speaking, what do you think of the following: the culture of Korea and Japan?" and "Generally speaking, what do you think of the following: the culture of Korea and China?" Each item is measured using a four-point Likert scale: 1 for 'very similar,' 2 for 'somewhat similar,' 3 for 'somewhat different,' and 4 for 'very different.' This was reverse coded during analysis.

National identity is a complex and multifaceted concept. In this analysis, national identity is measured according to the feeling of national pride based on the degree to which respondents agree with the statement, "Generally speaking, I am proud of South Korean nationality." This item is measured using a four-point Likert scale (1=agree strongly; 2=agree somewhat; 3=disagree somewhat; 4=disagree strongly) and then reverse coded in the process of analysis. To test the generation hypothesis, I included dummy variables for the three generations. They are coded 1 for respondents

born in the period of colonization and 0 otherwise; 1 for respondents who were in their twenties during democratization and 0 otherwise; and 1 for respondents who spent their teens in the post-politicization period and 0 otherwise.

Historical issues are measured with, "Generally speaking, what are the most serious problems for Korea-Japan relations? Select the two most serious problems" and, "Generally speaking, what are the most serious problems for Korea-China relations? Select the two most serious problems." On the list of options available to the respondents, comfort women disputes and the distortion of history in textbooks represented historical issues between Korea and Japan, and distortion of Goguryeo history and traditional culture disputes represented issues between Korea and China. For each question, respondents opting for neither of the historical issues were coded 1, respondents opting for one of the historical issues as the second-most serious issue were coded 2, respondents selecting one of the historical issues as the most serious issue were coded 3, and respondents selecting both historical issues were coded 4. I also include several variables, such as gender, age and education, which are designed to control for other potentially compounding factors.

#### IV. Empirical Analysis

The respondents' opinions regarding the prospects of an EAC according to gender, age and education are shown in Table 1. Of the

sample, 24 percent responded positively to the idea of an EAC being successfully established, 32 percent responded negatively, and 44 percent stated that they did not know. This trend of greater pessimism held for most age groups, except for those respondents in their sixties. In terms of optimism alone, those in their twenties were ranked highest, followed by those in their sixties; respondents in their forties were ranked lowest. The relationship between optimism and age thus follows a u-shaped curve. In terms of education, people who graduated from high school or had at least two years of college education are more pessimistic than people who only graduated from middle school. Overall, female respondents in their twenties with less education are the most positive about the possibility of an EAC, whereas male respondents in their thirties and forties with a high education are the most negative.

Table 1. Attitudes toward EAC by gender, age and education

Variable		N	possible (%)	impossible (%)	I don't know(%)
Gender	Male	496	24	41.1	34.9
	Female	508	23.8	23.2	53
Age	19-29	184	27.7	29.9	42.4
	30-39	206	21.4	35	43.7
	40-49	222	19.4	36	44.6
	50-59	188	24.5	35.6	39.9
	60+	204	27.5	23.5	49
Education	middle school	142	20.4	21.8	57.7
	high school	397	20.4	32.7	46.9
	2yrs college+	463	28	34.3	37.6
N (Total)		1004	24	32	44

Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate attitudes toward an EAC depending on economic interdependence and security concerns. The perception of economic interdependence between Korea and Japan and between Korea and China did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with attitude toward an EAC. The people unconcerned about the return of Japanese militarism are the least optimistic about an EAC. This contrasts with the perception of Chinese hegemony; half of those people unconcerned about Chinese hegemony state that they are optimistic about the EAC.

Table 2. Optimism for EAC by economic interdependence (%)

	Low (0-3)	Middle (4-6)	High (7-10)	F
Korea-Japan economic interdependence	44.2	42.4	42.3	0.053
Korea-China economic interdependence	45.2	45.6	28.1	1.497

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 3. Optimism for EAC by security concerns (%)

	Low (0-3)	Middle (4-6)	High (7-10)	F
Concerns about Japanese militarism	30.8	45.0	42.7	5.106*
Concerns about Chinese Hegemony	50.0	36.4	46.2	2.983†

†  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 4 displays the relationship between the prospects of an EAC as perceived by Koreans and their opinions regarding the cultural similarity between Korea and either Japan or China. The more similar a respondent believes the cultures of Korea and Japan to be, the more optimistic they are about an EAC. Only 30 percent of the respondents who think the Korean and Japanese cultures are very dissimilar are optimistic about the EAC, whereas 60 percent of the respondents who think them very similar are optimistic. There was no consistent trend with regards to the perceived cultural similarity of Korea and China.

Table 4. Optimism for EAC by the perception of cultural similarity (%)

cultural similarity	Very dissimilar	Somewhat dissimilar	Somewhat similar	Very similar	F
Korea-Japan	30	39.2	45.9	60	2.673*
Korea-China	33.3	49.7	39.7	40.7	2.113†

†  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5 shows the relationship between national identity and attitudes toward an EAC. According to the results of an ANOVA, opinions regarding the prospects of an EAC vary according to the level of national pride. Only 57 of the 1,004 respondents were not proud of South Korean nationality (strongly not proud + somewhat not proud), which indicates most Koreans have strong national pride. Because of this, it is more reasonable to compare people who feel strongly proud with those who feel only somewhat proud; those who classified themselves as strongly proud are more positive than those who feel only somewhat proud (50.7% and 36.9%, respectively).

Table 5. Optimism for EAC by national identity (%)

	strongly not proud	somewhat not proud	somewhat proud	strongly proud	F
proud of nationality	33.3	46.7	36.9	50.7	3.478*
N	3	54	579	368	

\* P<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

Table 6 reveals that opinions regarding the prospects of an EAC differ depending on the generation from which the respondent hails. Slightly more than half of the pre-liberation generation and slightly less than half of the post-politicization generation are optimistic about an EAC, whereas only a third of the democratization generation is optimistic. It is not surprising that the post-politicization generation is generally optimistic regarding an EAC. Members of this generation were born in the 1980s and were teens in the 1990s-2000s, accepting globalization as the spirit of the times and embracing the spread of information technology into all aspects of daily living. They are more accustomed to transnational experiences such as traveling abroad and meeting foreigners compared with other generations. However, contrary to expectations, neither the post-politicization nor the pre-liberation generation demonstrates statistical significance.

Table 6. Optimism for EAC by generation (%)

Generation (age in 2013)	Optimism	t (p)
Pre-liberation generation (late 60s+)	51.4	1.099
Democratization generation (mid 40s~early 50s)	32.1	2.827**
Post-politicization generation (20s)	48.1	1.249

\* P<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

Table 7 demonstrates the relationship between the awareness of historical issues and attitudes toward an EAC. In general, the controversy about history textbooks and comfort women involving Japan and the disputes about traditional culture and Goguryeo history involving China are thought to strain the relationships among East Asian countries and hinder the building of trust. The results of this study, however, produce no consistent correlation. In fact, those who consider historical issues to be serious are not more likely to be pessimistic about an EAC.

Table 7. Optimism about an EAC in relation to historical issues

	not at all	Not very much	somewhat	very much	F
Importance of historical issues in K-J	44.7	45.2	37.1	43.8	0.972
Importance of historical issues in K-C	43.1	38.6	44.4	46.7	0.311

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## V. Empirical Results

In this analysis, I use logistic regression models to estimate the effect the explanatory variables discussed above have on public opinion regarding the prospects of an EAC. Table 8 presents the results of the analysis adding economic interdependence, security concerns, cultural similarity, national identity, generation, historical issues and socio-demographic factors. Model 1 is designed to test the generalizability of existing European theories when applied to Korean

attitudes. To this end, I include economic interdependence, security concerns, and cultural similarity - all drawn from European experiences - and introduce socio-demographic factors as control variables. Focusing first on socio-demographic variables, females are 85 percent more likely than males to be optimistic about an EAC. This is in opposition to the general assumption that men are more willing to accept political and social change. Age and education are not statistically significant in Model 1.

Contrary to expectations, the perception of economic interdependence between Korea and Japan and between Korea and China does not return a statistically significant result. Neither does concern about security. The perception of cultural similarity between Korea and Japan and between Korea and China followed expectations. Those who think the Korean and Japanese cultures are similar are 78 percent more likely to say that they are optimistic about an EAC than those who think the cultures are dissimilar. On the other hand, those who think the Korean and Chinese cultures are similar are 35 percent less likely to be optimistic. As the results from Model 1 show, one out of the three explanatory variables drawn from the European experience is applicable to Korea. In other words, an interest in the economy and security does not trump cultural influences in determining Korean attitudes toward an EAC.

Model 2 tests the hypothesis concerning national identity, considered a representative feature of Koreans. Earlier, I hypothesized that national and regional identity would be incompatible due to exceptionally strong national identity in Korea.

Table 8. Determinants of EAC prospect

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B (S.E.)	Exp(B)	B (S.E.)	Exp(B)	B (S.E.)	Exp(B)	B (S.E.)	Exp(B)
Female=1	0.616 (0.182)	1.851***	0.605 (0.183)	1.831***	0.656 (0.187)	1.928***	0.715 (0.191)	2.043***
Age	0.012 (0.007)	1.012	0.010 (0.007)	1.010	0.034 (0.012)	1.035**	0.033 (0.012)	1.033**
Education	0.117 (0.087)	1.124	0.118 (0.088)	1.125	0.191 (0.092)	1.210*	0.188 (0.094)	1.206*
K-J economic dependence	-0.038 (0.065)	0.962	-0.033 (0.066)	0.968	-0.018 (0.067)	0.982	-0.014 (0.068)	0.986
K-C economic dependence	-0.034 (0.069)	0.967	-0.032 (0.069)	0.968	-0.05 (0.070)	0.951	-0.053 (0.071)	0.948
K-J cultural similarity	0.576 (0.154)	1.780***	0.577 (0.154)	1.781***	0.568 (0.158)	1.765***	0.559 (0.159)	1.749***
K-C cultural similarity	-0.435 (0.156)	0.647**	-0.424 (0.156)	0.655**	-0.386 (0.159)	0.680*	-0.406 (0.160)	0.667*
Concern J-militarism	-0.009 (0.045)	0.991	-0.01 (0.046)	0.99	-0.008 (0.047)	0.992	0.01 (0.049)	1.01
Concern C-Hegemony	0.064 (0.048)	1.066	0.061 (0.048)	1.063	0.063 (0.050)	1.065	0.053 (0.052)	1.054
National identity			0.326 (0.151)	1.385*	0.313 (0.153)	1.367*	0.33 (0.154)	1.390*
Pre-liberation Generation					-0.348 (0.450)	0.706	-0.29 (0.453)	0.749
Democratization Generation					-0.454 (0.232)	0.635*	-0.45 (0.235)	0.638†
Post-politicization Generation					0.897 (0.344)	2.453**	0.887 (0.348)	2.428*
K-J historical issues							-0.225 (0.132)	0.799†
K-C historical issues							0.083 (0.108)	1.807*
Constant	-1.862 (0.790)		-2.915 (0.935)		-4.349 (1.094)		-3.965 (1.144)	
-2Log Likelihood	729.938		725.228		711.904		700.223	
Model Chi-Square	33.222		37.932		51.256		53.376	
Cox & Snell R2	0.058		0.066		0.088		0.092	

† p&lt;0.01, \* p&lt;0.05, \*\*p&lt;0.01, \*\*\*p&lt;0.001

The results from Model 2 are inconsistent with this hypothesis. Korean pride does not exhibit a negative relationship with optimism about an EAC, but is in fact positively related. The inclusion of this variable did little to alter the effects of the other variables.

Model 3 tests the attitudes toward an EAC with the inclusion of the generation variable. The first point to note is that the democratization generation and the post-politicization generation have a direct, statistically significant effect on EAC optimism. Holding all other variables constant, members of the democratization generation are approximately 36 percent less optimistic about an EAC than other generations. The post-politicization generation has the greatest impact on EAC optimism of any included variable. Everything else being equal, this generation is around 2.5 times more likely to be optimistic than the other generations. Therefore, our hypothesis that attitudes toward an EAC are affected by generation is confirmed.

The influence of the generation variable is significant enough to affect the socio-demographic variables. Age and education, both of which were not statistically significant in Models 1 and 2, reach statistical significance in Model 3. Each added year of age produces an increase in optimism of 3.5 percent and an increase in one level of education (for example, from middle school to high school) raises optimism by 21 percent. It is not surprising that the inclusion of generation in Model 3 increases the impact of age and education on EAC optimism, given that these two factors are strongly related to generation. The addition of generation to the model did little to alter the already statistically significant effects of cultural similarity and

national identity. Economic interdependence and security concerns, which did not originally exhibit statistical significance, were similarly unchanged.

In Model 4, I present a full model for the attitudes toward an EAC with the inclusion of the historical issues variable. The results show that awareness of Korea-Japan historical issues has an impact on attitudes toward an EAC. Those who think the historical issues with Japan are serious are 20 percent less likely to be optimistic. Korea-China historical issues, however, do not have a statistically significant effect. In addition the inclusion of these variables do not alter the effects of the other variables

Taken together, being female, being of older age and holding a higher education status are all related to optimism regarding the prospects for an EAC. Cultural similarity and national identity are positively or negatively related to attitudes toward the EAC. Two generations demonstrate a statistically significant effect; the post-politicization generation is more likely to be optimistic and the democratization generation to be pessimistic. Lastly, the more seriously people consider the historical issues with Japan, the more likely they are to be pessimistic about an EAC. Therefore, Hypotheses 1, 2 and 4 are rejected and Hypotheses 3, 5 and 6 are partially confirmed.

## VI. Conclusion

In this paper, I developed and tested a series of hypotheses regarding the attitudes of Korean citizens toward the establishment of an EAC. Three of these hypotheses - economic interdependence, security concerns, and cultural similarity - were used to test the generalizability of hypotheses drawn from prior research into the determinants of support for regional integration in European countries. In consideration of the distinct characteristics of Korea and Korean citizens, I also included the effects of national identity, the generational gap and historical issues.

Four important points can be discussed from this analysis. First, of the economic, security and cultural variables, it is the cultural factor that has statistically significant effect on EAC optimism. The utilitarian and strategic interests related to economic interdependence and security concerns did not affect optimism for an EAC. This indicates that the perception of cultural similarity affects public attitudes and as such has important implications for policy. For example, the strengthening of economic interconnectedness and the resolution of security problems may not directly influence public attitudes toward an EAC. From this, it can be concluded that neo-functionalism provides a stronger explanation for the prospects of an EAC than realism or culturalist in South Korea.

Above all, this provides a potential explanation for the 'Asia Paradox.' This refers to the observation that, despite rapidly increasing economic exchanges in Northeast Asia, the relations

between the major nations Korea, Japan and China remain relatively tense. This analysis suggests that economic effects do not directly influence the formation of an East Asia identity and subsequent EAC establishment. In addition, the present study found little empirical evidence that security concerns regarding the hegemonic and militaristic actions of China and Japan, respectively, were related to the expression of either optimistic or pessimistic views of an EAC. In this sense, positive spillover effects from economic cooperation and/or increased security in East Asia would be difficult to achieve, at least for the time being.

It should be noted, however, that high perceived cultural similarity does not always ensure a positive and supportive attitude toward the establishment of an EAC. It was found that if a respondent considered the Korean and Japanese cultures to be highly similar, they were more likely to be optimistic about an EAC, whereas the opposite was true for Korea-China cultural similarity. The reasons for this difference are a topic worth further investigation.

National identity, measured as Korean pride, had a positive relationship with optimism for an EAC. Contrary to the expectation that strong Korean pride would contribute to a negative attitude toward a regional community, results indicated that those with greater national pride are more likely to be optimistic about an EAC. That is probably because Korean pride leads to the expectation that Korea will play a key role in building any regional community. More research is necessary to firmly establish the relationship between national and regional identity in East Asian countries, but the tentative

conclusion of this analysis is that national identity and regional identity are not opposing ideas, but can in fact be complementary.

It is also necessary to address the generation factor, which has the strongest impact on EAC optimism. The democratization generation was 36 percent less likely and post-politicization generation 243 percent more likely to be optimistic about an EAC. In particular, it should be noted that the education and life experiences of the post-politicization generation may eventually lessen resistance to a transnational regional community. Given that the post-politicization generation consists of people in their twenties, it is difficult to say whether the effect of age or that of generation takes precedence. The fact that older people were more optimistic is unexpected when compared to the equally optimistic results for the post-politicization generation in their twenties. The reason could be because optimism for an EAC demonstrates a u-shaped curve according to age.

Finally, the fact that historical awareness between Korea and Japan affects attitudes toward an EAC demonstrates that there would be little progress in the establishment of an EAC without the settlement of historical disputes. As it were, it is clear that the settlement of historical issues among East Asian nations cannot be separated from the intent to establish an EAC. If an EAC is launched in the future despite this obstacle, it could represent a massive risk in which the past and future of all East Asian people is at stake.

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요약

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## Who is Optimistic about an East Asian Community?: Public Attitudes toward an EAC in South Korea

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동아시아 공동체에 대한 대다수의 연구들은 규범과 제도적 측면에 초점을 맞추고, 대중여론의 중요성은 간과한다. 본 연구는 동아시아 공동체에 대한 한국인들의 전망을 개인적 수준에서 검토한다. 2013년 서베이 자료를 사용하여 경제적 상호의존, 안보 우려, 문화적 친밀성과 관련된 가설을 제시하는데, 이들 가설은 유럽연합에 대한 기존 연구에서 도출되었다. 덧붙여 한국적 특수 맥락을 반영하는 세 개의 가설들 곧 강한 국민 정체성과 세대 차이, 역사인식과 관련한 가설을 함께 제시한다. 통계적 결과는 모든 것이 똑같다면 국민정체성, 인지된 문화유사성, 역사문제 인식이 동아시아 공동체 건설에 대한 한국인의 태도에 영향을 미친다는 것을 보여준다. 또한 다른 세대에 비해서 민주화 세대는 동아시아 공동체에 대해 덜 낙관적이고 20대의 탈정치화된 세대는 더 낙관적인 것으로 나타났다.

**주제어:** 동아시아 공동체, 지역공동체, 여론, 국민정체성, 역사인식, 문화적 유사성