

# [Japanese colonialism](https://assignbuster.com/japanese-colonialism/)

[Government](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/government/), [Colonialism](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/government/colonialism/)

Japanese Colonialism
North and South Korea are nations that while filled with
contempt for Japan have used the foundations that Japan laid during
the colonial period to further industrialization. Japan's colonization
of Korea is critical in understanding what enabled Korea to
industrialize in the period since 1961.
Japan's program of colonial industrialization is unique in
the world. Japan was the only colonizer to locate various heavy
industry is in its colonies. By 1945 the industrial plants in Korea
accounted for about a quarter of Japan's industrial base. Japan's
colonization of Korea was therefore much more comparable to the
relationship between England and Ireland then that of European
colonization of Asia or Africa. Japan's push to create colonial
industry lead Japan to build a vast network of railroads, ports, and a
system of hydro-electric dams and heavy industrial plants around the
Yalu River in what is now North Korea. The Japanese to facilitate and
manage the industrialization of a colony also put in place a strong
central government.
Although Japan's colonial industrialism in Korea was aimed at
advancing Japanese policies and goals and not those of the Korean
populace; colonization left Korea with distinct advantages over other
developing countries at the end of World War Two. Korea was left with
a base for industrializing, a high level of literacy, experience with
modern commerce, and close ties to Japan. Japan's colonial heavy
industrial plants were located primarily around the Yalu River in
North Korea. Because of this the North had an edge in
industrialization. For many years the North had the fastest growth
rates of the communist countries, and its cities were on par with
those of Eastern Europe. It was not until the early 1970's that the
South surpassed the North in levels of industrialization. Because most
of the heavy industrial plants were either located in North Korea or
destroyed by the Korean War the groundwork for industrialization that
South Korea received from Japanese colonialism consisted mostly of
social changes. During colonialism Korea's populace in increasing
numbers moved to cities and became urbanized these new urbanites
worked in factories and were used to the organization of modern
commerce. The Japanese also let a small number of Koreans develop into
a semi-elite. Although this group never held powerful positions many
of them were educated in Japanese schools, and became either involved
in the military or worked as businessmen, bureaucrats, lawyers, and
doctors. This elite provided much of the leadership and framework for
post World War Two Korean Government in Korea. They had an intimate
knowledge of Japanese companies, language, organizational structure,
and government.
The Korean elites that emerged after the liberation of 1945
and helped steer Korea's economic policies under Park Chung Hee had an
intimate knowledge of Japan. Some of them like Park had been educated
in Japanese schools, some had worked for the Japanese, and nearly all
of them spoke fluent Japanese. It was this closeness to Japan both
geographically and culturally that made it natural for the Koreans to
use the Japanese model of industrialization when Japan's economy
boomed in the 1960's and 1970's. The leaders of Korea were ambivalent
about relying on Japan, on one hand they felt a profound respect for
Japan and its successes and on the other a deep hatred for what Japan
had done to Korea in the past. But Japan still served as a model for
Park Chung Hee who normalized relations with Japan in 1965 and turned
to Japan for technology, equipment, and a model for development.
Some nationalistic Korean scholars say that Japan's
colonialism slowed Korea's growth by exploiting Korea and disturbing
its economy. But these views of Korea ignore the fundamental role that
Japan's policies of industrial colonialism played in allowing Korea to
Industrialize during the 1960's. Japan's colonialism improved
infrastructure, urbanized the nation, educated much of the populace,
gave the pubic experience with modern commerce, and indoctrinated
Korean elites in the Japanese language and culture. It was Korean
elites history and close ties with Japan that made them turn naturally
to Japan to provide a development model. Japan's legacy of colonialism
in Korea is felt not only in the many graves and monuments that
attest to Japanese brutality but also in the modern cities of South
Korea and the heavy industries along the Yalu River in the North.