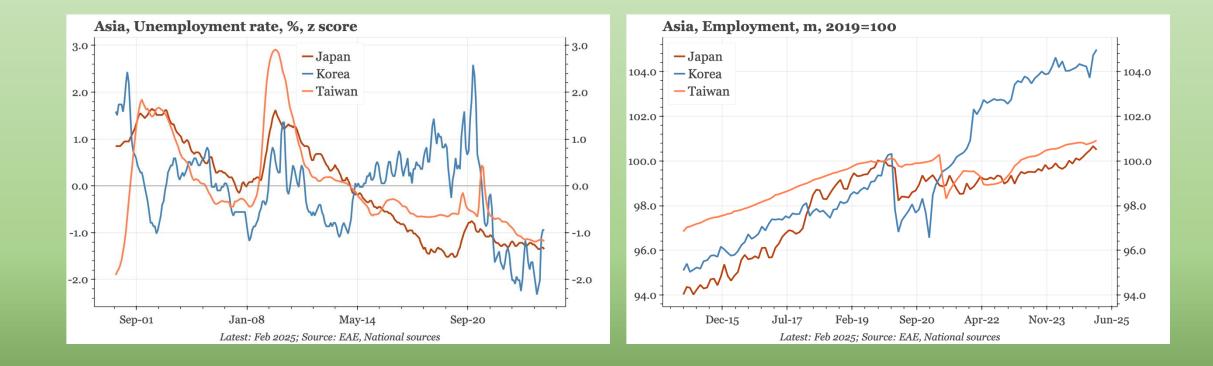
Korea v Taiwan

Both have low unemployment. So why isn't Korea's labour market tight?

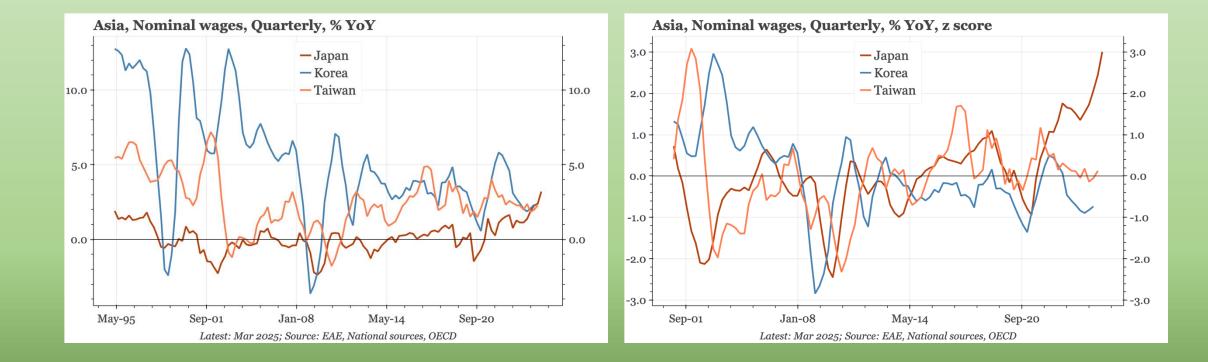
April 2025

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The puzzle The labour market looks tightest in Korea...

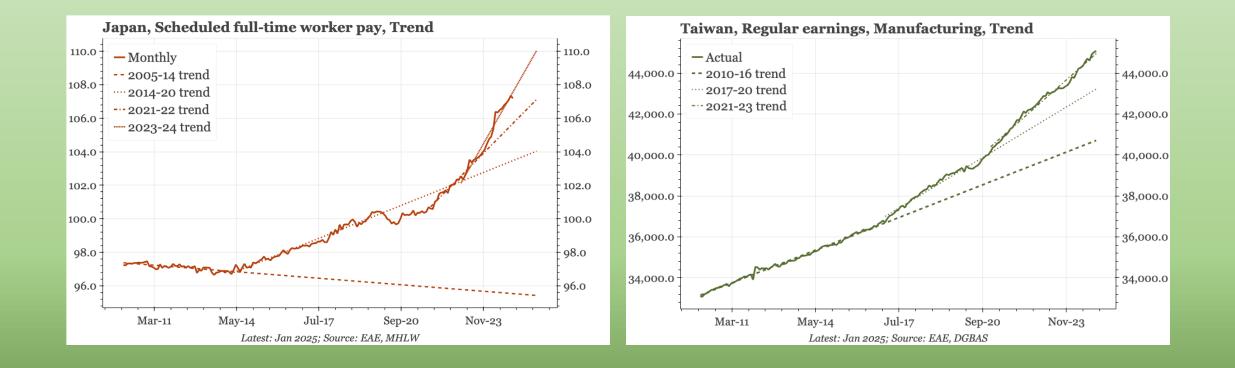


The puzzle ...but wages haven't responded...



The puzzle

..while in Japan and Taiwan there's a clear pick-up



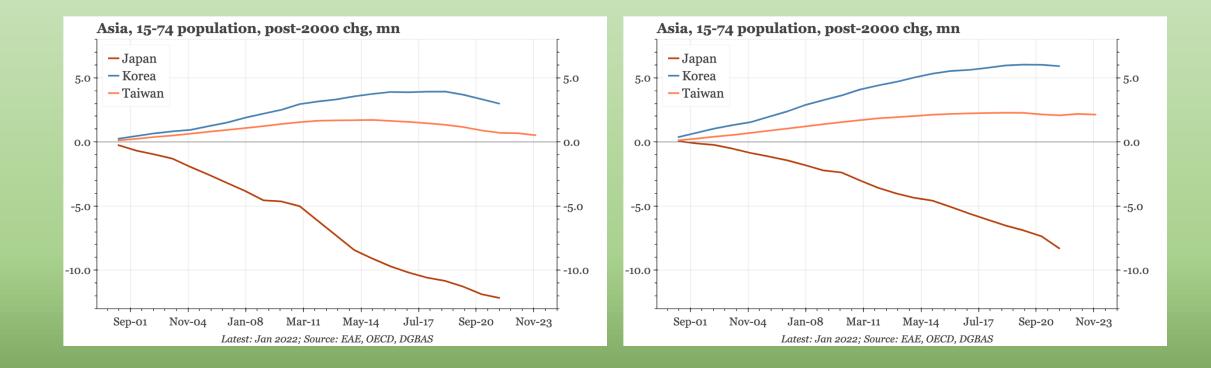
Supply

Job creation suggests strong demand, especially in Korea

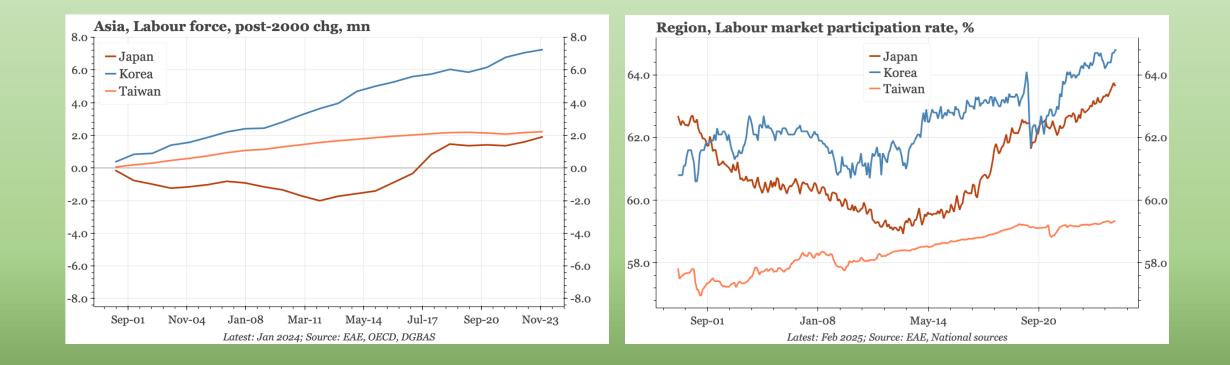


Supply

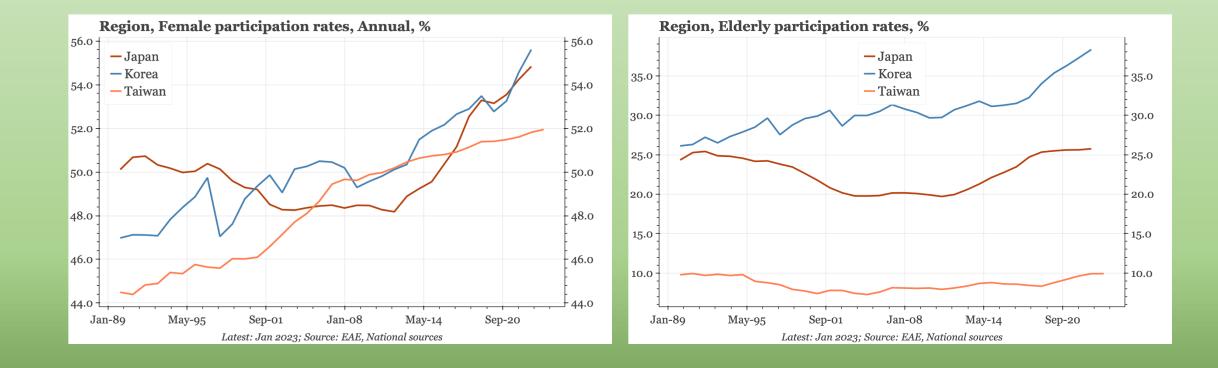
Given demographics, that should mean labour market tightening...



Supply ...but labour supply outgrows populations

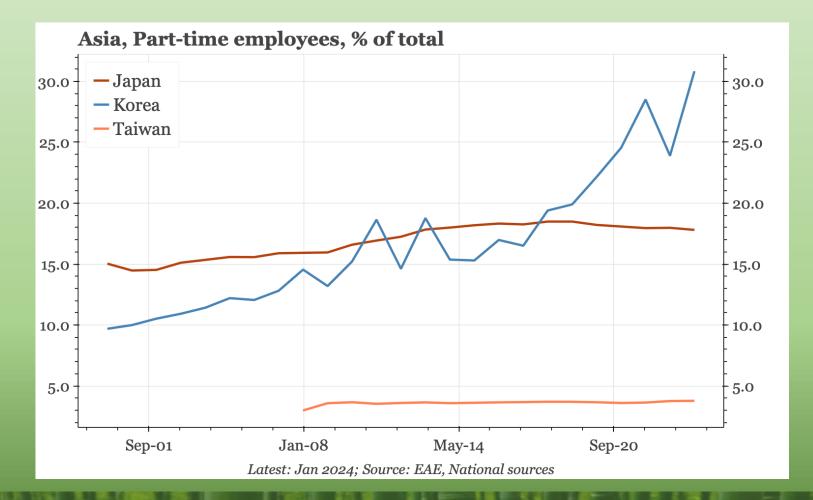


Supply The big change is in participation...

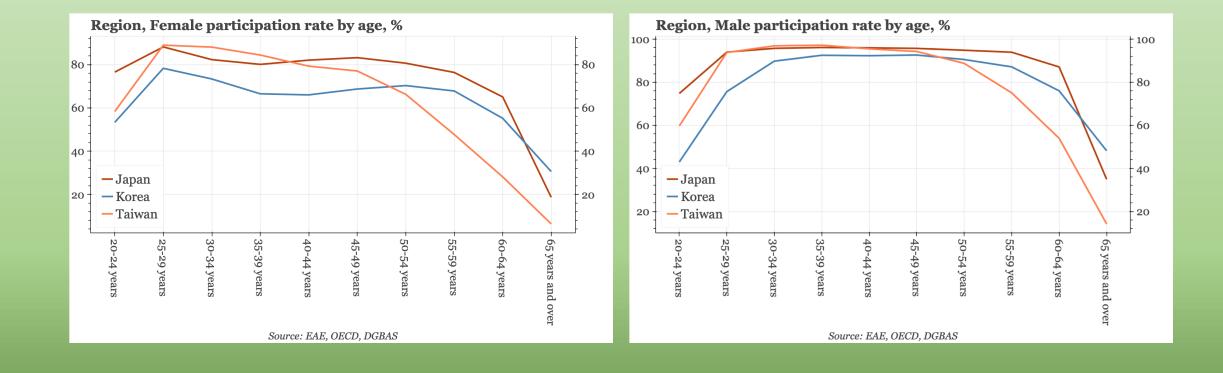


Supply

Rising participation rates \leftrightarrow more part-time jobs

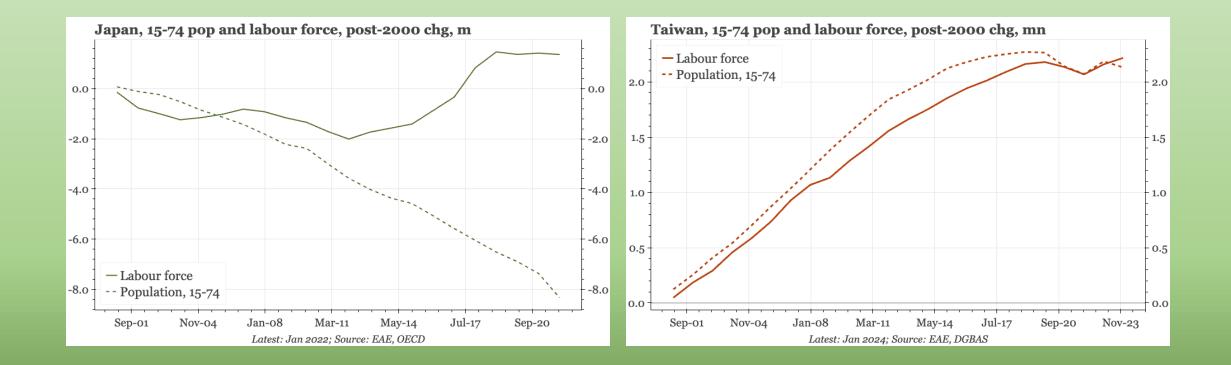


Supply Taiwan's participation lags...

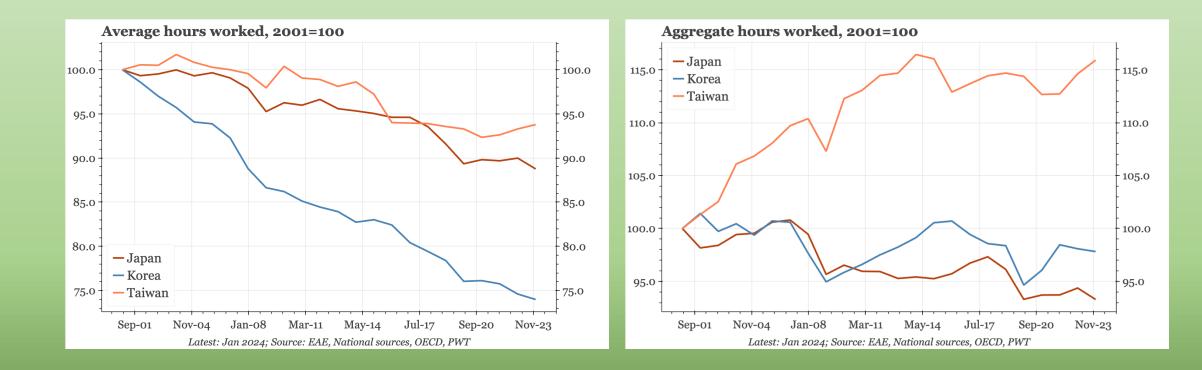


Supply

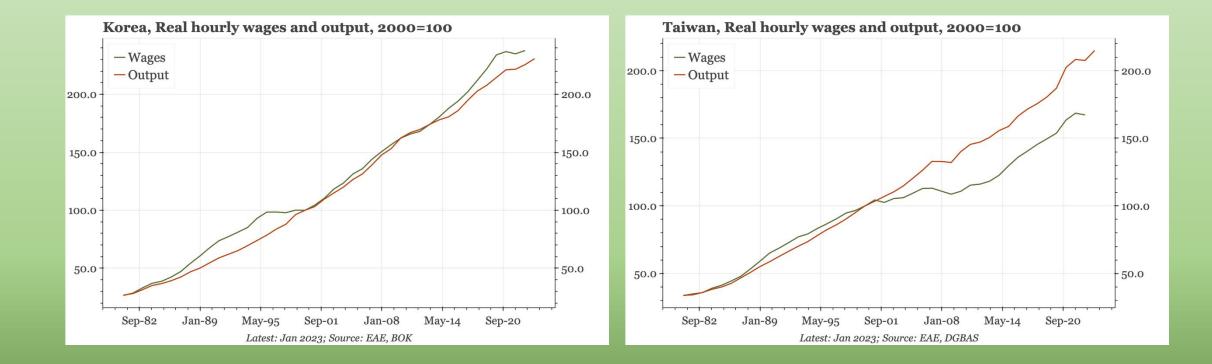
...so population is a bigger constraint on labour supply



Total hours worked suggest strong demand only in Taiwan



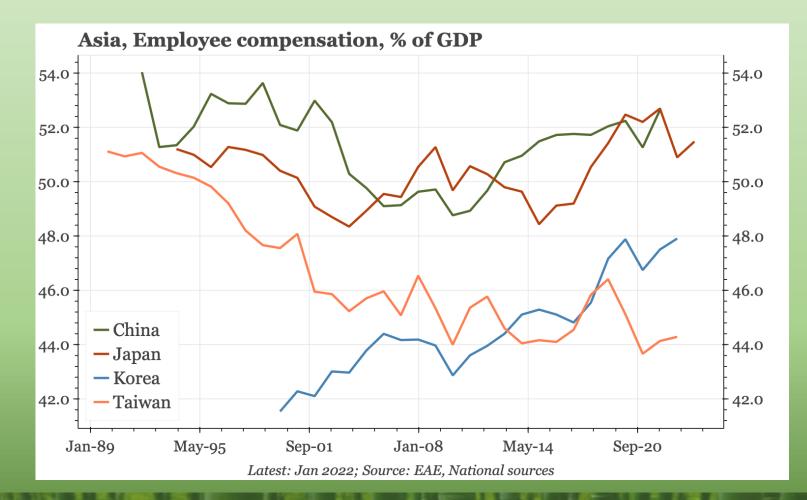
2000s Hollowing out was most apparent in Taiwan



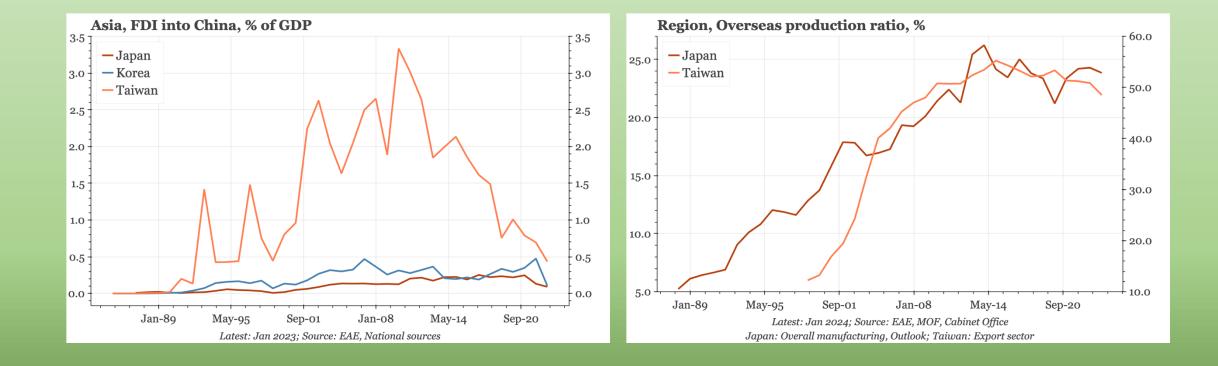
Taiwan's terms of trade hit was similar to Korea...



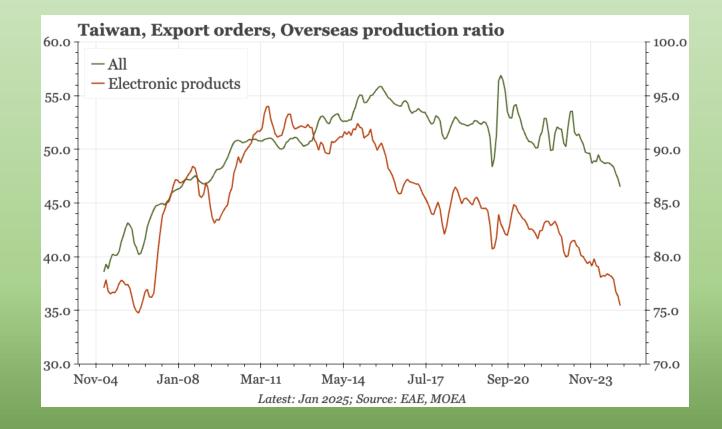
...but labour lost out more in Taiwan



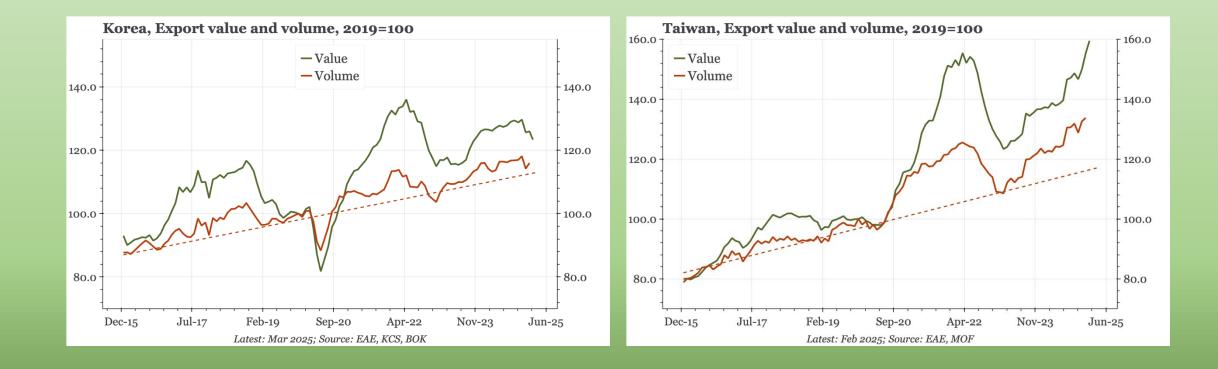
Demand The backdrop was offshoring...



Demand ...but that is now reversing...



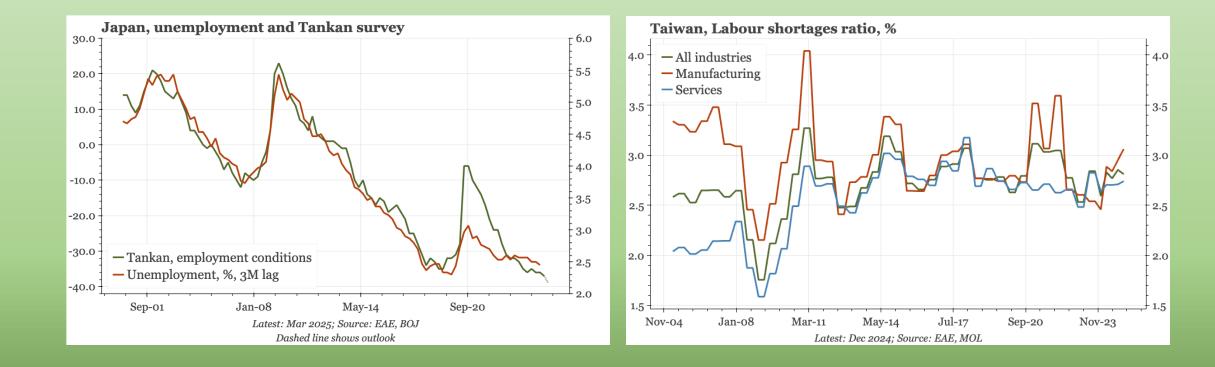
Demand ...and Taiwan's economy lifts off with pandemic



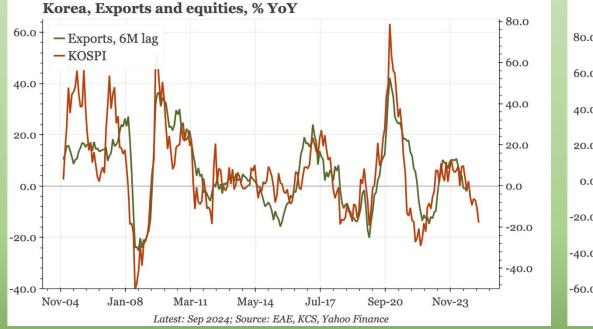
Korean labour demand was weak even before tariffs...



...whilst in Japan and Taiwan the backdrop was better

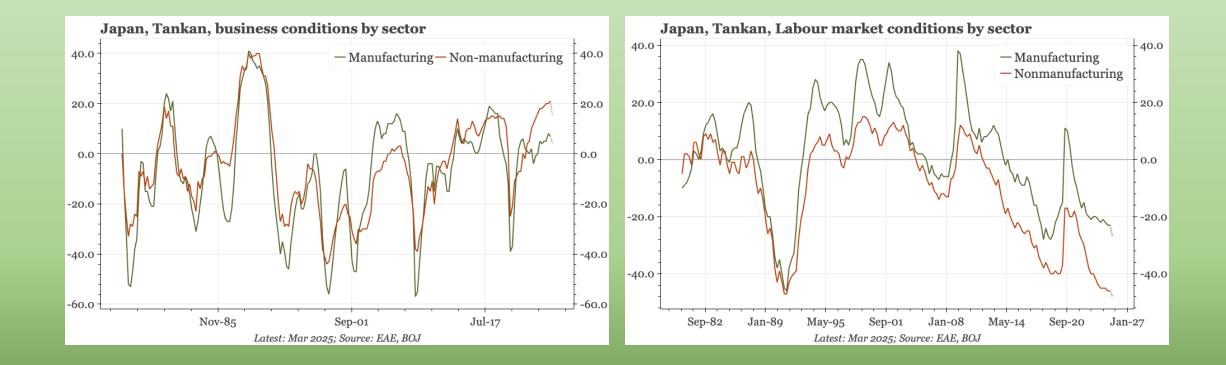


Labour markets will now quickly deteriorate...





...though the strength of services supports Japan



East Asia Econ

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