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Nationalism, Nationalistic *Demos* and Democracy: East Asian Experiences

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Abstract

This research is an attempt to offer a new theoretical framework to understand the political dynamics of East Asian nationalism(s), a topic overlooked by both historians and political scientists. The political dynamics of nationalism shown in the two historical case studies investigated here, the bottom-up ultra-right-wing nationalism in 1930s Japan and the anti-state left-wing/anti-imperial nationalism in 1980s Korea, poses a strong anti-thesis against our commonsensical understanding of nationalism. From the Eurocentric perspectives, the nationalist projects of nation-making always create a homogeneous – either real or fictive – population that is willing to fight and die for the state. The historical case studies shown in this study, however, refute the monolithic interpretation of nationalism in the modern history. Assuming that the nation-making projects in Japan and Korea were very successful, the histories of 1930s Japan and 1980s Korea show a hidden face of nationalism – the more nationalized, the more rebellious – as the nationalized subjects claimed *ownership of the state*. The experiences of

nationalistic fever in Japan and Korea provide a prism to analyze contemporary Chinese neo-nationalism, which has become one of the most important research subjects in China. The experiences of Japan and Korea suggest that the only outcome we can predict from the surge of nationalism is the vitiated and weakened state capability to control the ideological realm of the society. Therefore, we can expect that the surge of nationalistic sentiments from the bottom up in Chinese societies pose a threat to the domestic stability managed by the Chinese Communist Party.

Keywords: *Chinese nationalism, Japanese nationalism, Korean nationalism, democracy, popular nationalism*

JEL classification: *D72, D74, F52, Z18*

1. Introduction

The rise of nationalism in the Chinese intellectual and public space has been one of the most heated issues for concerned East Asia scholars. Starting from the sensational boom of "Say No" publications in 1996 to the series of massive anti-American demonstrations in major Chinese cities following the 1999 bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, the 2002 collision of a US Navy EP-3 Spy plane with a Chinese fighter and the boost of nationalistic images through the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, nationalistic fever in China is neither temporary public sentiment nor the result of outright government manipulation. China scholars agree that the 2005 Shanghai protest regarding the revisionist Japanese history textbook controversy has proven that social spaces for voluntary nationalism/patriotism are emerging through popular culture and the Internet, and the Beijing authority appears to be threatened by the uncontrollable nature of popular nationalism (Zhao, 2005; Gries,

2005; Liu, 2006; Ho, 2006; Yang and Zheng, 2012; Tang and Darr, 2012; Sinkkonen, 2013). This unending march of nationalistic fever in China has made both scholars and journalists across the globe dismayed and frustrated in their attempt to explain the political dynamics of these nationalistic discourses and events. This study provides a comparative historical perspective on the relationship between nationalism, nationalistic *demos*, and democracy in 20th century East Asia in order to contextualize the emergence of nationalism in Chinese society within a broader historical and regional perspective in the region.

2. The Problem Set: Entangled Nationalism and Democracy

The phenomena of contemporary Chinese nationalism have been discussed by a sizable number of Western and overseas Chinese scholars. Since the simple but powerful explanation of "the government manipulation hypothesis" first raised by Chris Christensen in 1996, which attributes the rise of Chinese nationalism to the Chinese Communist Party's attempt to replace communist ideology with nationalism (Christensen, 1996; Metzger and Myers, 1998; Zhao, 1997, 1998), a majority of academic and journalistic accounts of Chinese nationalism predominantly regarded it as state discourses rather than popular discourses.[1] A persistent stereotypic image of Chinese polity – a fundamental dichotomy between the democratic/pro-Western populace and the despotic Chinese Party/state, or more succinctly "Big Bad China and the Good Chinese" (Wasserstrom, 2000) – has not been seriously challenged by this new tide of nationalism.

The Western inclination toward an image of the omnipotent Chinese Communist Party is, ironically, best criticized by Kang Liu, one of the authors of *Behind the Scene of Demonizing China*[2]. He contends that "it becomes clear that tales of China's political repression and terror have

more to do with the political, ideological, and commercial objectives of the Western media than with what is really happening in China today"[3], and calls for in-depth analyses of the tension between the mass consumption of MTV, karaoke concerts, TV soap dramas and Kungfu fictions versus the state's desire for ideological control of society in China (Liu, 1997). As he properly emphasizes, the realm of cultural consumption in China has become a battleground where different forces in Chinese society collide with each other. Hence, we have to be more attentive to the newly conspicuous situation in China, that is, non-state actors are aggressively participating in the production of political discourses that used to be monopolized by the party-state (Kong, 2014).

Extrapolating from Kang Liu's observation, I argue that Chinese popular nationalistic discourses, especially those in non-state sectors, are inherently subversive. During the Diaoyutai 釣魚台 (Senkaku 尖閣) dispute between Japan and China in 1996, the liberals in Hong Kong aggressively challenged Beijing for not being nationalistic, or at least not a good nationalist, with a strong enough anti-Japanese political stance (Gries, 2004: 123). When Jiang Zemin 江澤民's 1998 visit to Tokyo became a fiasco due to his failure to receive a written or official apology regarding the past Japanese aggression against China, a well-known Chinese dissident Qin Yongmin 秦永敏 accused Jiang for rashly accepting "the irrational demands of the Japanese, who agreed to offer apologies to the Koreans but not to the Chinese" and considered his visit to be "a national humiliation" (Hong Kong AFP, 26 November 1998; FBIS CHI 98 330). As I have explored in another place (Seo, 2005a), the dissident narratives in China since the 1989 Tiananmen Democratic Movement have been rooted more in nationalism, developmentalism and modernization than on the notion of democracy and popular sovereignty.

The nationalistic discourses should be regarded as subversive precisely because the popular belief in the Chinese nation is genuine.

Many assume that the popularization of nationalism in Chinese society proves the Chinese Communist Party's hegemonic status in the realm of ideology production and its effectiveness in the field of ideology. Nevertheless, even if the Chinese citizens truly believe in the nationalistic rhetoric of the government, ironically, they are not necessarily docile and subservient. As Slavoj Zizek argues, "the greatest catastrophe for the regime would have been for its own ideology to be taken seriously, and realized by its subjects" (Zizek, 2001: 92). Therefore, the success of the Chinese nationalism project comes from its ability to re-direct the political loyalty of the populace from clans, locality, class, ideology, and state/party toward the reified Chinese nation through which the Chinese party-state is able to derive political and historical legitimacy (Seo, 2005b). At this moment, the issue of popular sovereignty, which is the core of any idea of democracy, arises. If the Chinese Communist Party is representing the Chinese nation, who are the members of the nation and what rights are these members supposed to claim?

For Western scholarship and popular mind-sets, the symbolic relationship between democracy and nationalism is negative and dismal due to the turbulent history of the Holocaust and subsequent collective attempts of ethnic cleansing by national collectivities. Nationalism has been seen as a vicious ideology which is "an upwardly mobile, power-hungry and potentially dominating form of language game which pretends to be universal", "attempting to stifle the plurality of non-national and sub-national language games within the established civil society and state in which it thrives", and "arrogant, confidently portraying the Other as inferior rubbish, as a worthless zero" that "becomes 'a continuation of totalitarianism by other means'" (Keane, 1998: 94-97), in conjunction with the increasingly popular post-modernist and constructivist perspectives of nationalism that see nation

as "invented" or "imagined", and the images of nationalism in the contemporary Euro-American world as fixed, fake and dangerous.

A few scholars, however, have tried to defend nationalism by promoting liberal or civic nationalism, while suggesting that the "emphasis on the importance of particular circumstances for the construction of personal identity does not contradict the universalist view of human nature" (Tamir, 1993: 7). Hence, unlike fanatic and zealous nationalism prone to be totalizing and violent, civil nationalism embraces discriminated minorities and indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the supporters of multiculturalism, such as Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, support the increased autonomy of national groups in a society since they believe that nationality is an indispensable aspect of people's identity and self-esteem. Nevertheless, civic nationalism might be a mere fantasy considering that virtually no state can write multiple histories or celebrate genuinely diverse holidays and festivals that are inherently cultural and religious. As Ernest Renan suggested more than a century ago, all nation-state projects of history writings and cultural activities involve the production of "willfully selective memories" and the forceful "forgetting", through which the state ensures the unlimited political loyalty from its subjects (Renan, 1996). Simply speaking, "there is no such thing as a culturally neutral state" (Spinner-Haley and Theiss-Morse, 2003: 524). Hence, as long as national identity is endorsed as a legitimate political grouping in a given society, the national/ethnic conflicts or the public desire to discriminate or exterminate subaltern and minority groups are unavoidable, since any winning or dominating national and ethnic group would monopolize the state's discursive functions.

Thus, it is relatively easy to conclude that nationalism, regardless of its variant and type, is inherently anti-liberal and, subsequently, against liberal democracy. Nevertheless, nationalism's antagonism against

liberalism does not necessarily mean that it is anti-democratic. As Fareed Zakaria accurately noticed, the illiberal form of democracy is becoming a fashionable mode of democracy in the twenty-first century within and outside America (Zakaria, 2003). Michael Mann further argues that "murderous ethnic cleansing is a hazard of the age of democracy since amid multi-ethnicity the ideal of rule by the people began to entwine the *demos* with the dominant ethnos, generating organic conception of the nation and the state that encouraged the cleansing of minorities" (Mann, 2005: 3). It is noticeable that these two authors fundamentally challenge the commonsensical myth of the binary image of nationalism and democracy in the twentieth century but return to the original relationship between the *demos* and the nation in the early nineteenth century. At the dawn of Western democracy, the core element of the democratic ideal was the principle of popular sovereignty from which the government would derive political legitimacy, as did the French Republic after the Revolution. The problem was, however, how to discern "the players and the playing field" since "the criteria for deciding just who is a citizen and just where the borders are cannot be derived from any logic intrinsic to the democratic enterprise" (Nodia, 1994: 6). In that sense, successful democracy can emerge only where the problem of community is solved, mainly by effectively creating a nation – an alternative name for "We the People" (Hahm and Kim, 2015) – through nationalism. The newly formed nationalism might be anti-liberal by suppressing minorities residing in the new imagined communities; nevertheless, it definitely is democratic in the sense that it resists either pre-modern autocracies or modern bureaucratic state apparatus by asserting the notion of popular sovereignty.

The purpose of this study is to provide an analytical framework to understand contemporary Chinese popular nationalism by introducing two cases of popular nationalism in East Asia: 1930s Japan and 1980s

Korea. In both cases, popular nationalism was aroused after decades-long state nationalization projects. While popular nationalism produced radically different political outcomes in 1930s Japan (fascist state) and 1980s Korea (democratization), both cases show that bottom-up nationalism challenged and vitiated the nationalizers, that is to say, the state. It is commonsensical that the rise of Japanese militarism during the pre-war era destroyed the 1920s' Taishō democracy (大正デモクラシー). As I argue in this paper, it was not necessarily the top-down oppression of the militarists that ended the Taishō democracy. Rather, the bottom-up nationalistic fever, that encouraged the Japanese Army and the fascist leaders, was responsible for the collapse of the Taishō democracy which contained much of liberal elements. The inability of the Japanese bureaucratic state to control the uproar of popular nationalism led the Army and fascist leaders to overthrow the semi-liberal democratic institution in the name of Japanese nation. In other words, the democratic nature of Japanese popular nationalism destroyed the semi-liberal democratic institution precisely because it was seen as "undemocratic". The Korean experience in the 1980s shows a different story. The highly bureaucratized un-democratic state was seriously vitiated, if not overthrown, by popular nationalism led by students and intellectuals.

As I discuss further, during the democratic movement in 1987, the discourses of nationalism were predominant over the discourses of democracy. Korean society did not evolve into a deeper nationalistic entity, not necessarily because Korean nationalism was benign or peaceful but because the Korean state was not entirely taken over by democratizing forces. These two historical cases of the rise of popular nationalism – followed by those two states' enormous efforts to nationalize their subjects – evolved into two radically different outcomes; one is the emergence of an ultra-right-wing fascist regime and

the other a new democracy. Both, however, resulted in the same outcome – a weakened or vitiated state apparatus.

3. The Rise of the Fascist State in 1930s Japan

The semi-liberal Taishō democracy of Japan ended with the Manchurian Incident of 1931, followed by the Kwantung Army (*Kantōgun* 関東軍)'s complete control of Northeast China, and a series of assassinations of high-ranking Japanese political leaders including two prime ministers between 1930 and 1932. The formal parliamentary political system was taken over by militarists and ultra-right-wing leaders that created a fascist regime centered on the re-invigorated Emperor system. Japanese political history between 1931 and 1945 is not often discussed in Japan and the West, instead is the simple narrative that a small number of ultra-right-wing leaders dragged the whole nation into a series of wars and indoctrinated fascist ideas to the populace for fifteen years. The post-war research on this period has shared a tacit consensus that an overwhelming majority of Japanese intellectuals, soldiers, bureaucrats and civilians were willing to but could not resist the rulers who were well equipped with ideological, political and physical apparatus to suppress any dissenting voice (Maruyama, 1969; Ienaga, 1978).

Recent scholarship on the rise of the ultra-right-wing nationalist regime in 1930s Japan, however, suggests a strikingly different picture. Louise Young, for example, argues that a close look at the reaction of the mass media and publishing industry to the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident of 1931 reveals that images of presses and publishing houses being suppressed by government censors (publicizing with great reluctance the official story of Japan's military actions in Manchuria) were heavily problematic and misleading. In fact, with little urging from

the government, the news media took the lead in promoting the war with imperial jingoism. Publishing and entertainment industries volunteered to cooperate with army propagandists, helping to mobilize the nation behind the military occupation of Northeast China (Young, 1999: 55-114). This spontaneity of the Japanese mass media is supported by Richard H. Mitchell's extensive study of the pre-war Japanese censorship system. Though the Taishō democracy was prone to build up a complete surveillance state through a sophisticated censorship system, the Japanese bureaucratic state never accomplished total control of the ideological realm, leaving a large space for indirect and insinuating dissent opinions (Mitchell, 1983). This reality was quite opposite to conventional wisdoms. As Sandra Wilson recently suggested, the Japanese censors in the 1930s "had to spend more time curbing enthusiasm for the Manchurian venture than dissent from it" (Wilson, 2002: 31). The rise of the war fever inside of the Japanese society forced and threatened, rather than provoked by, the Japanese bureaucratic state, which was unprepared for the bottom-up nationalism. Japanese society was, therefore, more eager and passionate about the expansion of the empire than the state. The Japanese state took the lead of the war fanfare only after the outbreak of the costly Sino-Japanese War of 1937 to justify massive war mobilization.

The new studies on the society's role in the radicalization of Japanese nationalism in the 1930s raises a fundamental question regarding the relationship among state, society, and the reified notion of nation. Existing studies on the emergence of the Japanese fascist regime were obsessed with the role of the state, in spite of the nation-wide and societal consensus of Japanese expansionist imperialism in the 1930s, while ignoring the issue of the nature of the Japanese society produced by the nationalization project beginning in the Meiji era (*Meiji-jidai* 明治時代). I do not suggest a simplistic political history that Japanese

society was the very source of the Japanese ultra-right-wing nationalism in the 1930s. Such an interpretation can easily fall into the cultural essentialism upheld by many Western Japanologists including Ruth Benedict[4]. Rather, I argue that the Japanese society which was able to promote ultra-nationalism was the product of the long interactions with the Japanese state. In other words, the state and society in Taishō 大正 and early Showa 昭和 Japan have negotiated and shaped each other.

It is rather clear that the Japanese state's nationalization project since the turn of the century fundamentally changed the Japanese social fabric. The seminal study by K.B. Pyle shows that the transfer of political loyalties from the natural village and hamlet (*buraku* 部落) to the administrative towns and villages (*chō-son* 町村) until the end of the Meiji era (1918) enabled the Japanese state, through the localities' positive identification with the nation-state, to "absorb new groups into the political community and to avoid disruptions that would destroy the social consensus upon which economic development depended" (Pyle, 1998: 16). The centralized political loyalty in Japanese society was further deepened by the government's deliberate myth-production mechanism. The state orthodoxy centered on the emperor ideologically denied politics as the representations of societal groups or private interests, while reifying the emperor system as the source of public morality and ethics (Gluck, 1985).

What is noticeable in the technology of Japanese nationalism at the turn of the century is that the state orthodoxy of nationalism was rigid enough "to prevent effective opposition by equating dissent with disloyalty", but, at the same time, vague enough "to adapt its injunctions to different needs, so that sacrifice in war and savings accounts in peace could both be justified in terms of the same national myths" (*ibid.*: 5). The co-existence of rigidity and vagueness of Japanese nationalism and the emperor system left the Japanese national subject confused regarding

one core question: if they had to be loyal to the nation, what categories of behavior were regarded as loyal, what were not?

The nationalization of the population did not necessarily produce a docile populace. From the beginning of the nationalization project during the mid-Meiji era, Japan witnessed the rise of a variety of anti-state nationalism in spite of the sheer fact that the state was the promoter of nationalism. Even with the exclusion of anti-Western and traditionalist nationalisms, such as the League of the Divine Wind (*Shinpūren* 神風連) in the 1870s, a number of patriotic and nationalistic societies, that often refuse to recognize the state's authority as the representative of Japanese nation, emerged during the late nineteenth century (McVeigh, 2004). The best example of nationalistic challenge against the state is the Hibiya 日比谷 Riot of 1905 (Okamoto, 1982).

With the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War by the Portsmouth Treaty, thousands of protesters in Tokyo condemned the government for the failure to gain satisfactory booty including Japan's complete control of Manchuria. For rioters, the Japanese bureaucratic state was betraying the nation and the emperor with a humiliating treaty. With the omnipresent "*Banzai!*" (ばんざい /万歳) for the emperor, the army and the navy indicated that the rioters were loyal and patriotic subjects exactly which the Japanese state intended to produce through its nationalization projects. Nevertheless, the rioters' vehement symbolic and physical attacks on the government buildings and private residents of the high-ranking officials proved that the government already had lost its monopoly on the prerogative to determine what it meant by being a loyal subject. In that sense, the Hibiya Riot was the moment when the populace began to see that the state as a rational, contemporary, calculating and realistic bureaucratic entity was a being subordinate and inferior to the Japanese nation which in turn appeared to be emotional, eternal, romantic and moral.

I interpret the rise of Japanese ultra-nationalism in the 1930s as an expanded and completed version of the Hibiya Riot of 1905. The socio-economic crisis of the late 1920s greatly helped the deep penetration of the Japan-centric, fundamentalist nationalist and right-wing groups into the low- and middle-class Japanese populace, from which most of the soldiers were recruited. Similar to the success of the Nazi organizations, a number of right-wing organizations, such as the Great Japan National Essence Association (*Dai Nippon Kokusui-Kai* 大日本國粹会), became popularized among youths (quickly obtaining hundreds of thousands of members) by promoting anti-democratic and anti-party politician slogans (McVeigh, 2004: 48). For them, the bureaucracy and party politics were seen as an unhealthy expression of "private" interests against the national interest. Similar to the Hibiya Rioters, the ultra-right-wing activists saw the state or ultimately *the political* itself as the enemy of the Japanese nation. Ironically, the ideological denial of politics had been actively promoted by the Japanese state itself by putting the monarch at the center of the emerging national myths during the late Meiji era (Gluck, 1985: 72).

Apparently, Japan in the 1930s was not the only place with the fever of "go-fast" imperialism and ultra-right-wing nationalism. The elements of extreme imperialism and nationalism historically existed in many places, including the United States, Britain and France during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (MacKenzie, 1984; Slotkin, 1992; Schneider, 1982). Even at the age of "the end of history", we still witness ultra-right-wing discourses throughout the globe and embedded within our daily lives. Hence, the existence of ultra-nationalism and the go-fast imperialism of the 1930s does not explain why Japan transformed itself into a fascist state. That is why the majority of Japanese historians have focused on the role of the state. Nevertheless, as I mentioned earlier, the Japanese state had nationalized its subjects,

but had not ultra-nationalized them. In other words, it aimed to create docile and disciplined national subjects, not radicalized and rebellious "idealists" who regarded the state as subordinate to an abstract Japanese nation and eventually took over the state and transformed it into a fascist state. In short, the emergence of the fascist state in mid-1930s Japan was not the intended consequence of the Meiji leaders' nationalization program. The ironical relationship between state nationalism and the emergence of the fascist state, therefore, should be explained through the way the state and society interacted.

One possible answer might be the weakness of the counter-discourses to overcome the popularized Japanese nationalism. Tomoko Akami convincingly explains that Japanese society could not develop the concept of "negative liberty" that would have produced individualistic liberal citizens (Akami, 2005). The novelty of Akami's interpretation lies in her emphasis on the two competing notions of liberty, "positive" and "negative". As Berlin proclaimed long ago, the negative, not the positive, liberty is the core concept of liberalism that can fight against the state's totalizing ideological and political projects (Berlin, 1969). The positive liberty for the full realization of the selfhood, unlike the negative liberty that means freedom from oppression, has a tendency to identify individuals with a collectivity. Hence, Akami contends that the internal logic of liberalism that prevailed in the age of mass democracy and empire, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was the source of the failure of the Taishō democracy. Though her study interestingly tries to explain why there was so little opposition against the emergence of a fascist state among the Japanese intellectuals, it instantly raises another question: why did fascist regimes become successfully established in very few countries, but not in every country with imperfect liberalism and imperialism?[5]

While accepting Akami's observation on the weakness of Japanese liberalism as a counter-discourse to fascism, my study tentatively argues that the emergence of the Japanese fascist state can be explained within the dynamics of nationalism, market-based mass culture, and imperfect authoritarianism during early twentieth-century Japan. As I mentioned earlier, the deep-nationalization of the Japanese society by the state reshaped the nature of the populace as early as 1905 – as the Hibiya Riot ironically proves it. The popular belief in the legitimacy of nation and the emperor system was sincere and genuine enough to challenge the bureaucratic state for betraying the glory of nation and the emperor. Studies of the Meiji and Taishō censorship, on the other hand, show that the Japanese state was not able to fully control the ideological sphere of the society. As much as the state failed to eliminate dissenting voices against the Japanese imperial expansion, it was also unable to control the popular imperial-jingoism and ultra-nationalism that emerged outside of the state's ideological apparatus. In the process of the ultra-right ideologues' take-over of the semi-authoritarian state, another factor – popular mass culture – was also deeply involved. This second factor is explored in detail below.

Japanese commercial media, especially newspapers, rapidly grew since the 1889 promulgation of the Meiji Constitution and virtually exploded through two wars, the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-5 and the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-5 (Huffman, 1997: 563). Newspapers actively exploited both anti-government and pro-imperialism sentiments at the same time to increase their circulations. Beyond being sensational reporters, newspapers often sponsored large social and political events to cultivate subscribers among the new urban middle-class. The Hibiya Rally, eventually developing into a massive riot, was also sponsored by a newspaper, which did not have clear anti-government agendum at the moment of preparation (*ibid.*: 301). Especially, the victory of the Russo-

Japanese war in 1905 fundamentally changed the public discourses of nationalism through a shifted focus from "national crisis" as a semi-colonial status of Japan in the international society to "national greatness" as a member of global imperialism (Wilson, 2005). Throughout the late Meiji era and the Taishō democracy period, the Japanese cultural industry became fully fledged with a fast-growing literate population produced by a nation-wide compulsory education system. In 1913, Japan already surpassed all Western imperial powers, except Germany, in terms of the number of published book titles – 27,000 new titles per year and 1,500 to 2,000 periodicals (Gluck, 1985: 12). By the late 1920s, commercialism had triumphed in the field of newspaper and publishing industry, while leaving little space for elite, politically dominated press and publishers (Huffman, 1997: 304).

When the Manchurian Incident occurred in 1931, the triangular dynamics of nationalism, commercial mass media and the imperfect censorship created a social war fanaticism. The Peace Preservation Law of 1925, which enabled the Home Ministry to censor and arrest dissenting political opinions, strictly controlled the information regarding what actually happened in Manchuria. Nevertheless, it could not prevent the rise of war fever promoted by the mass media that deliberately used the abundant slanted information to attract more readerships (Tomiko, 1973: 542). The Kwantung Army, which was well aware of the need of domestic popular support, did not, and was not able to, coerce the media to propagate the Army's cause, but indirectly encouraged the war fever by providing a great deal of information and images on Manchuria when requested (Wilson, 2002: 68). The increased demand for information from Manchuria reinvigorated an almost-saturated Japanese media market in the 1920s. Market competition, in conjunction with the outbreak of war, "stimulated technological innovation in newspaper production as well as the diffusion of new

medium of communications, radio" (Young, 1999: 58). When the dissenting voice was suppressed by censorship, the media elites' perspectives were delimited by the concept of positive liberty and patriotism, and the populace was fully nationalized; the full-fledged popular cultural industry followed a pre-determined path toward ultra-nationalism and imperial jingoism.

One of the most vivid examples of the role of the media during wartime Japan is the report of the 1937 Nanking 100-man killing contest. Many historians cite this bestial act of two Japanese lieutenants who started a "murder race" of killing 100 Chinese as fast as they could in Nanking as the most convincing evidence of the brutality of Japanese imperialism. Bob Wakabayashi's meticulous examination of the factuality of the event, however, suggests that the history of a "murder race" was fabricated from the beginning (Wakabayashi, 2000). He instead argues that the history was initially exaggerated by Japanese journalists who were passionate enough to write a fake hero story and, later, uncritically accepted by left-wing liberal journalists as the evidence of the Japanese war guilt. Wakabayashi's impressive study, I believe, provides a better understanding of the nature of Japanese mass media and society during the wartime than to the nature of the Nanking Massacre, which he originally intended to elucidate. Watabayashi's study ironically shows how much the Japanese media was devoted to producing "propaganda-cum-entertainment" articles that could please the Japanese readers. In other words, the commodity-value of the "murder race" during the wartime exposed the very nature of Japanese journalism and, to some extent, Japanese media-consumption in general. If the Nanking 100-man killing contest did not happen, but was instead fabricated by journalists, it reveals that Japanese mass media and society were more aggressive and chauvinistic – to the level where a murder race is an entertainment and news commodity - than the army and the

state that might not commit the act. The murder-race report case shows the triangular dynamics among the mass cultural industry, the populace and the state (army). When the army induced the war-propaganda media into the battlefield, the mass media and the populace out-performed the army itself, imperfect censorship, the nationalized populace as well as media intellectuals and the harsh market competition in the Japanese cultural market can be attributed to this success.

4. Postcolonial Korean Nationalism and the Democratization

If the Japanese Showa state was overcome by, or dominated by, radical right-wing nationalism driven by the commercial fever of "go-fast" imperialism, the Korean state in 1987 was forced to compromise with the powerful left-wing nationalism, especially among college students. The emphasis on nationalistic discourses by student activists might surprise many English-speaking scholars, since a majority of the studies on Korean democratization in the 1980s focus on "civil society" (Kim Sunhyuk, 2000; Kim, 2003; Armstrong, 2002) or "labor movement" (Koo, 2001) to describe the nature of the movement and few have been attentive to the fundamentalistic nationalism embedded within the young Korean generation at that time. This paper reveals the nationalistic foundation of the Korean democracy movement first by analyzing the language of democracy movements from 1960s and 1980s and by interpreting the historiography of the Korean democracy movement established during and after the 1987 democratization[6].

Unlike the English literature or academic analyses of the Korean student movements, the 1980s student activists refer to their own and precedent student movements as the "*minjok, minju*" (national, democratic) movement, instead of democratic movement. The attachment of the term "*minjok*" 민족/民族 (national) basically stems

from the understanding of the April 19th, 1960 Democratic Revolution, which resulted in the collapse of the authoritarian First Republic (1948-1960). The April 19th Movement was initially called as "*minju*" 민주/民主 (democratic) movement until the 1980s. Indeed, the slogans and pamphlets during March and April of 1960 were solely focused on the denouncement of sham elections and government corruption.

The intentions of the student activists were neither coherent nor consistent. Stemming from spontaneous anger provoked by the revelation of a high school student's brutal death in the hands of the police, the sole purpose of the movement was straightening out the result of the March 15th presidential election that allowed another term for Syngman Rhee (Yi Seungman 이승만/李承晩). Student activists quickly returned to their campuses as soon as the dictatorial president announced resignation followed by the call by mainstream politicians and the media for the students to demobilize themselves (Kim, 1988: 37). Mobilized students in general stayed on campus until the summer of 1960, while focusing on the issues of "campus democratization", "national enlightenment movement" and "new life movement".

Though there has been a consensus on the historical meaning of the April 19th Democratic Movement as an anti-dictatorial movement, the attachment of the term "*minjok*" in the naming of the movement reveals a sharp bifurcation in the April 19th historiography. State discourses until the 1980s explain that student activists became irresponsible and created grave chaos by starting a "romantic" and "utopian" unification movement and inducing hundreds of public protests over various socio-economic issues. The military coup of May 1961 was justified as a legitimate reaction to the social chaos occurring in the spring of 1961. Though Park Chung-hee 박정희/朴正熙 and his subordinates, the core of the military coup, denounced the "chaos" caused by the student protesters, they actively praised the April 19th Democratic Movement

for toppling corrupt politicians from power and claimed that the military coup was the inheritor of the April 19th Movement.

The official image of the April 19th movement, however, was challenged by students and young scholars in the 1980s. Instead of delimitating the scope of the movement into protests against the sham election, the new historiography began to focus on the so-called "chaotic period" in early 1961. The student activists who focused on the on-campus issues began to stage a few street protests as the February 8th Korea-U.S. Economic Agreement passed the parliament. Many students and progressive political forces saw the Agreement as giving up Korean economic sovereignty. Between February and April 1961, student activists began to re-activate the discourses of anti-colonial nationalism, such as: "Now is the era of national liberation and the complete abolishment of colonialism" and "right now, the only way to make a historic, progressive reform on this land is to unite anti-feudal, anti-foreign oppression and anti-comprador capital forces and to make a national revolution" (Seo, 1997: 27). Furthermore, student activists started a fresh unification movement, which consisted of a public suggestion for a "South-North Student Conference" (*nambuk haksaeng hoedam*) and "preparation committee for the national student association for national unification" (*minjok tongil jeonguk haksaeng yeonmaeng gyeolseong junbi wiwonhoe*) (*ibid.*).

While these "radical unification movements" were labeled as "chaotic" behaviors of overly romantic students by authoritarian state discourses in 1970s and 1980s, a new historiography emerged in the 1980s in accordance with the rise of "anti-state" nationalistic discourses[7]. According to the new historiography, April 19th was not a civil/democratic revolution that overthrew an autocratic regime, but "an incomplete people's revolution for democracy and genuine national liberation and a proxy revolution executed not by people but by

students" (Pak, 1983). Since the new historiography began to perceive that the national contradiction (*minjok mosun* 민족모순/民族矛盾), the divided nation, is the ultimate source of the people's suffering, it was natural that the people's resistance against an autocrat (Syngman Rhee) was followed by a people's movement for unification. In that sense, the unification movement in early 1961 was newly seen as an integral part or a second phase of the April 19th movement (Kim, 1991). For the 1980s intellectuals, the April 19th Revolution was, therefore, re-defined as part of the nationalistic resistances against the neo-colonial/neo-imperialistic world order[8].

I argue that the re-definition of the April 19th revolution has little to do with the new research or findings in history per se. Rather, it was triggered by the new historiography of modern Korean history, which saw post-liberated Korea as a semi-colonial/semi-feudal society managed by American imperialism that rapidly dominated the Korean college campuses. Many Korea scholars notice the Kwangju 광주/光州 Massacre of May 1980 to be the watershed for the new understanding of Korean modern history. Since the Korean Army was under the authority of the chief of the ROK-US Combined Forces Command, an American general, the massacre committed by the Korean Army in May 1980 was a trigger for a new image of America, an imperial and colonial power that supports a brutal military regime. Since the Kwangju Massacre, dissident social groups, especially student activists, began to promote a new strain of nationalism which is deeply rooted in a new historical consciousness that understand the status of the Republic of Korea (ROK) as a semi-colony of the American imperialism (Kim, Dong-Chun, 2000: 352)[9]. Unsurprisingly, the Kwangju Massacre was followed by a series of attacks on American icons in Korea: arson of the American Cultural Center in Busan 부산/釜山 (1982), the incineration of a Star-Spangled Banner (1982), and a sit-in protest in the American Cultural Center in

Seoul (1985).

For 1980s Korean student activists, the United States became a sworn enemy responsible for the division of the nation, the longevity of dictatorship and military rule, and countless massacres from the notorious Cheju 제주/濟州 Massacre (1949) to the Kwangju Massacre (1980). Until the late 1980s, the majority of college campuses in Korea were dominated by a radical nationalist group, the "National Liberation" faction (NL), and the emergence of the NL-controlled nation-wide organization of student activists, *Jeondaehyeop* (the National Council of College Representatives)[10]. Though it is undeniable that the Kwangju Massacre was the historical momentum for the emergence of a new strain of Korean nationalism, which anchored on a strong anti-Americanism, I suggest that the rise of a new historiography preceded the massacre, and the new historical consciousness was created by deeper dynamics of the politics of nationalism.

Most of 386ers[11] agree that the most important reading during their college life was *Haebang jonhusa ui insik* [Understanding History before and after the Liberation] (UHL), published just before the Kwangju Massacre, February 1980[12]. The book may not be as revolutionary as many contemporary Korean conservatives argue[13]. The contributors of the book include a few established scholars in major universities as well as a few dissident thinkers. They are nationalistic in terms of their concerns and themes but neither left-wing nor pro-North Korea. The enormous power of this book in the 1980s ideological spectrum, therefore, was not out of the revolutionary appeals of the writings themselves. Rather, its long-term impacts stemmed from the shifted focus in the readings of Korean modern history. The orthodox historiography that permeated into the official education system had little interest in the event of liberation in 1945 itself. The history between the March 1st Movement (1919) and the establishment of the

Republic of Korea, South Korea, (1948) was largely ignored or partially/sparsely dealt with by the government-sponsored writers.

While the primary purpose of history education was the promotion of the Korean state and nation as the ultimate target of political loyalty and the creation of the anti-communist population, the orthodox historiography had little or no capacity to deal with the complexity of the colonial and liberation histories that are filled up with the dense interconnection between left and right, deep ambiguity regarding the question of collaborators, and the harsh nature of the Realpolitik surrounding the process of the division in 1945. Public history education primarily treated the history around 1945 with uncomfortable silence and a rather unconvincing heroic story of how the right-wing defended against the left-wing in domestic and international struggles, while leaving the question of who struggled against Japanese imperialism and the national division.

The book UHL fundamentally challenged the official historiography simply by shifting the focus to the shadowy era of modern Korean history and revealed stunning stories of tragedy, such as: the existence of the autonomous government which was suppressed by the American occupying force; the purge of countless numbers of left-wing and middle-course "nationalists"; the elimination of the early efforts to punish "pro-Japanese collaborators" by the Syngman Rhee regime; and, most importantly, the presence of the socialist and communist struggles against Japanese imperialism.

Young Korean intellectuals, deeply and profoundly influenced by this new historiography, founded a new research area, nick-named "the study of the three years' history after the liberation" (*Haebang samnyonsa*), while publishing and translating a number of books focused on the formerly silenced issues, such as the independent struggles in North China and Manchuria – including that of Kim Il-Sung – and the

cooperation between the left-wing and right-wing activists (Kim, 1982; Choi, 1985; Scalapino and Lee, 1986; Cumings, 1986; Kim and Kim, 1986; Lee, 1989; Suh, 1989). In short, the new historiography established a new political and historical subject: a nation that overcomes the ideological division of left and right. In that sense, the division was now seen as the ultimate source of pain and suffering for the nation[14] while making the developmental discourses of “GNP”, “Industrialization” and “Modernization” as secondary keywords in writing history.

Since the censoring authorities initially rejected the manuscript of UHL in the summer of 1979, the book was actually written during the darkest period of Korean democracy, the *Yushin* 유신/維新 regime (1972-1979). What is ironical is the fact that the *Yushin* period was the climax of the state-led Korean nationalism, represented by *Saemaul* (New Community) Movement, *Bansanghoe* (Neighborhood Association) and the fetishism of “Gross National Product” and “Export”.[15] While the whole population was mobilized under “go-fast” developmental state projects, the state also enforced massive patriotic education projects, such as recitation of the “National Charter of Education”[16] and the “Pledge to the National Flag”[17], as well as the implementation of “National Ethics” to all levels of education. The series of educational and social policies implemented in the 1970s were, in short, the condensed process of “national subject making”, while its methods and contents were similar to the Japanese nation-making projects from the late Meiji to the early Showa era (1890s – 1930s).

Thus, we can safely argue that a new nationalistic historiography represented by the publication of UHL was born amid the fervent state projects of nation-making and the nationalization of the grassroots. In other words, while the state tried to nationalize the society, the society was able to produce its own version of nationalism. The college students

in the 1980s who endlessly recited the rhetoric of statism and nationalism, such as the "National Charter of Education" and the "Pledge to the National Flag", were easily convinced in the 1970s by the new nationalistic historiography that focuses on the suffering of the nation by division and so-called "neo-colonialism". Hence, the Kwangju Massacre as a trigger for the popularization of anti-imperial/anti-colonial discourses is only one aspect; the emergence of a nationalistic young population is another. The former could construct a discourse of "victimized nation" in an efficient and powerful manner due to the conditions set by the later.

5. Conclusion

The political dynamics of nationalism shown in the two historical cases investigated here, the bottom-up ultra-right-wing nationalism in 1930s Japan and the anti-state left-wing/anti-imperial nationalism in 1980s Korea, pose a strong antithesis against our commonsensical understanding of nationalism. From the Eurocentric perspectives, the nationalist projects of nation-making always create a homogeneous – either real or fictive – population inspired by a strong sense of belonging to the national community (Anderson, 1991; Hobsbawm, 1990). The most important invention of the modern state might be the creation of national subjects who are willing to fight and die for the state that manipulates the symbolism of the nation. The historical case studies shown in this study, however, refute the monolithic interpretation of nationalism in the modern history. Like their Western counterparts, both the Japanese and Korean states were eager to produce a homogeneous and loyal population through massive state projects of nation-making. In some sense, the projects in these countries were much more successful than any other part of the world since these countries are still called, and

understood as, exceptionally homogeneous nation-states. Assuming the nation-making projects in Japan and Korea were very successful, the histories of 1930s Japan and 1980s Korea show a hidden face of nationalism – the more nationalized, the more rebellious – as the nationalized subjects claimed ownership of the state.

The experiences of nationalistic fever in Japan and Korea provide a prism to analyze contemporary Chinese neo-nationalism, which has become one of the most important research subjects in China scholarship (Zheng, 2008; Callahan, 2006; Gries, 2004; He, 2007; Zhao, 2004). It seems that most academic debates are centered on the effectiveness of Chinese nationalism, such as the expansion of patriotic education and popularization of war memories, given that effective nationalism means irrational, revisionist, populist, and dangerous Chinese domestic/foreign policies and an ineffective one is transient, ephemeral and superficial. I believe this binary image of Chinese nationalism deeply reflects Euro-centric experiences, especially those of Nazism and Fascism.

The primary function of radical nationalism shown in East Asian histories is not the creation of a certain type of regime. Rather, its political significance should be found in its capacity to destroy the status quo in both domestic and international fields. The experiences of Japan and Korea suggest that the only outcome we can predict from the surge of nationalism is the vitiated and weakened state capability to control the ideological realm of the society. Therefore, we can expect that the surge of nationalistic sentiments from the bottom up in the Chinese society poses a threat to the domestic stability managed by the Chinese Communist Party.

China scholars recently noticed that the CCP is well aware of this hidden face of popular nationalism. When Chinese authorities found the 2005 anti-Japanese protests in Shanghai, the largest instantaneous mass rally in Shanghai since the Cultural Revolution, uncontrollable, they

posted hundreds of uniformed and plainclothes police forces surrounding Tiananmen Square (*Washington Post*, April 16, 2005). With the second nationalistic fever occurring within the Chinese publication market, the first being signified by the massive consumption of "Say No" books in 1996 and 1997, nationalistic writers in China produced another syndrome of nationalistic fever, this time with the keyword of "Unhappy China".[18] While the nationalistic discourses of the 1990s were based on the deeply rooted sense of the "century of humiliation", Chinese nationalistic writers in the 2000s are demanding both the Chinese government and international community to recognize China as a great power who has the ability and will to defend the global economy from the recent recession. With this newly gained confidence, the notion of *Tianxia* 天下 (all under heaven) is becoming popular in public and official discourses in China (Callahan, 2008). When the China-centered universe, *Tianxia*, is ignored, the Chinese public, according to the writers of "Unhappy China", will be disgruntled as much as the Japanese public was infuriated by the seemingly humiliating outcome of the 1905 Portsmouth Treaty.

Notes

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1. A few scholars emphasize the populistic dimension of Chinese neo-nationalism. See, Li, 1997; Wasserstrom, 2002; Gries, 2004.
2. *Zai yaomohua Zhongguo de beihou* 在妖魔化中國的背後 [behind the scene of demonizing China] is one of the anti-American bestsellers published in 1996. This book, written by eight Chinese scholars and journalists who mostly studied in America, argues that the American media is deliberately distorting, or demonizing, the image of China.
3. Kang Liu's argument on Western political and commercial objectives reminds us of the fanfare of the American media on the rise of nationalism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. From a journalistic point of view, nationalism in these regions was seen as a "sleeping beauty" that had been long-repressed in the primordial national consciousness, as an expression of denied desires liberated by the kiss of freedom. See Suny (1993: 3).
4. Ruth Benedict (1967, orig. 1946). *The chrysanthemum and the sword: Patterns of Japanese culture*.Cleveland: Meridian Books.
5. A tacit assumption among post-War Japanese history scholarship was affirmation of the suppressed Japanese civil society, which was inherently the same as Anglo-American civil society. As Rumi Sakamoto suggests, the Post-War intellectuals, such as Maruyama Masao 丸山眞男 , believed that the source of Japanese ultra-nationalism in the 1930s was the failure to accomplish the mission of total-Westernization – leaving Asia and entering Europe – stated by Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 . Nevertheless, when the focus was on the failed Westernization, it was silent about the sheer fact that Japan was highly successful in importing the Western mind-set of imperialism and colonialism based on social Darwinism. This is why Ienaga Saburō 家永三郎 , who was deeply lamented about the ruthless suppression of the Japanese intellectuals in the 1930s, has no difficulty

subscribing to the colonialist historiography of the Korean peninsula, which believes that the southern part of the peninsula was a Japanese colony by the fifth century A.D. (see Sakamoto, 2001, and Ienaga, 1979: 3-4).

6. For a fuller discussion on this issue, see Seo (1999).
7. The pioneer work that promoted a new historiography was Kang *et al.* (1983).
8. Ironically, the new historiography better provides an explanation on why the student activists did not actively resist the May 16th military coup of 1961. Recent studies reveal that most Korean students were impressed by the nationalistic slogans of the new military regime, see Yi (1988).
9. For a long-term symbolic consequences of the massacre, see Lewis (2000).
10. For a detailed description of student activist factions in the Korean student movement, see Pyeonjipbu (1988).
11. A term coined by the Korean mass media to denote a reform-oriented and nationalistic generation emerged through the 1980s democratization movement. When the term first emerged in late-1990s Korean society, the student movement generation was in its 30s. Two later numbers, 8 and 6 indicate that they attended college in the 80s and were born in the 60s.
12. The book was published by Hangilsa (Seoul) and sold more than half a million copies in the Korean book market. Five more volumes were published until 1989.
13. In February 2006, the newly emerging right-wing scholars published a two-volume title, *Re-interpreting the History before and after the Liberation*. The new title claims that the radical left-wing discourses produced by *Understanding History before and after the Liberation* were dangerously revolutionary and uncritically absorbed by the contemporary Korean youth. (*Dong-A Ilbo* 동아일보/東亞日報 , February 9, 2006)
14. A newly popularized term, "*bundan cheje*" (the system of division), well reveals this consciousness. A term coined by a renowned left-wing

historian, Man-gil Kang, which means that the division resulted in a distorted political system in both North and South by producing a group of politico-economic elites whose interests were vested in the situation of division itself. The first comprehensive discussion on this issue appears in Kang (1989).

15. For the ideological aspect of the *Saemaul* Movement and *Bansanghoe*, see Han (2004) and Seo and Kim (2015).
16. For the significance of the National Charter of Education in the nation-making process in Korea, see Hwang (2005).
17. The actual invention and implementation of the Pledge to the National Flag were recently reported in a Korean left-wing magazine. See "Let's Abolish 'the Pledge to the National Flag'", "The Current Pledge is Totalitarian" and "Fascism in the Moral Education" in *Hangyorae 21*, January 3, 2006.
18. Song Xiaojun 宋曉軍 *et al.* (2009). *Zhongguo bu gaoxing* [unhappy China] (《中國不高興：大時代、大目標及我們的內憂外患》). Nanjing 南京 : Jiangsu Renmin Chubanshe 江蘇人民出版社 .

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