

## SOUTH KOREAN NATIONALISM - THE CATEGORY OF THE OTHER IN CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL NARRATIVE

### Summary

This dissertation focuses on **identification, characterization and analysis of the neighboring countries different roles in construction of national identity and nationalism in South Korea**. When most research on Korean national identity focuses on ethnic-related issues like shared bloodline, the proposed study proposes a perspective in which neighboring states play an important role, based on assumption that identity is formed in a process of either interaction with or against the "Other".

The following **specific questions** were posted: (1) Which factors are determining South Korean national identity? (2) What roles Japan and North Korea play as the "Significant Other" in construction of South Korean nationalism? (3) Do bilateral relations influence image of the "Other" in South Korean nationalism? Or bilateral relations are influenced by nationalism? (4) Is the image of the "Other" permanent or fluent? (5) What implications are associated with neighbor countries in national narrative? (6) Who in South Korea constructs the national narratives: the state / political elite or the nation? (7) For what purpose can national hostile or friendly narratives about another country be used by the state?

**Chapter I** discusses issues related to nationalism, national identity and national narratives. The very understanding of such concepts as the nation influences the construction of the narrative. Although in this dissertation the emergence of nations and nationalisms is considered a contemporary phenomenon, and also assumes their construction, most Korean researchers (primarily historians) assume the opposite perspective. By presenting both the assumptions that define the framework of this dissertation and the Korean perspective, one can capture the elements of construction process. This chapter also discusses concepts of the reproduction of nationalism in the form of "banal" popular culture (film). This part of the dissertation also defines "the Significant Other" and formation of a national identity in relation to other groups.

**Chapter II** examines the context in which Korean identity arose after the fall of the Joseon Dynasty. Although this part of the work does not concern South Korea directly, it is necessary to understand the changes taking place on the Korean Peninsula. The experience of colonialism is the source of the common Korean identity from which two separate nationalisms were formed: North and South Korean. The relationship between cinema as a national narrative and the emergence of Korean identity is also interesting, as their development took place in the same period of time. For these reasons, this part of the work presents the problem of creating a national narrative under occupation (colonialism).

**Chapters III and IV** examine roles of Japan and North Korea in South Korean nationalism. The changes in the perception of these countries and the use of rhetorical visions of "the Significant Other" in bilateral relations and internal politics are presented in a chronological manner. For both of these chapters, the starting point is the end of Japanese colonialism, the legacy of which is still visible today. Together with the Cold War, this experience shaped the Korean Peninsula. In both cases, the analysis of the national narratives was completed by the administration of President Moon Jae-in. While Moon Jae-in's presidency is still ongoing and cannot be judged in retrospect, it was an important benchmark for research due to the political shift: two terms of conservative presidents have been replaced by a progressive candidate who decided to revisit President Kim Dae-jung's "Sunshine Policy". This meant further changes in narratives about North Korea and a return to anti-Japanese sentiment.

**Conclusion** of this thesis presents how South Korean case study highlights the importance of analyzing national identity and nationalism in international relations. International politics is not driven solely by rational factors, and with regard to the two "Significant Others" - Japan and North Korea - emotional factors play a role in decision making. Moreover, having two "Significant Others" and two identities - Korean and South Korean - complicates bilateral relations with neighboring countries. As a Korean nation, South Korea should pursue unification with the DPRK, while feeling the need to settle accounts

with the colonial period, which generates a conflict with Japan. For the South Korean nation, on the other hand, North Korea poses the greatest threat - also in the sense of the symbolic legitimization of the power and representation of Korea. This identity requires striving for domination over the DPRK, for example in the international arena, and encourages cooperation with Japan. Having two identities defined against two different "enemies" causes the Republic of Korea's policy towards Japan and North Korea to change frequently. The identification and characterization of the roles played by Japan and North Korea as "Significant Others" in South Korean national narratives is becoming a useful tool in analyzing South Korea's behavior on the international stage. In this way, emotional behavior can become more predictable, especially if each of the "identities" is associated with two the political scene. Liberal and centrist parties declare their support for denuclearization and reunification and accountability to Japanese crimes, while the conservative ones are wary of North Korea. It should also be noted that with democratization, one of the actors became civil society, which took the initiative in shaping some national narratives.

Through the prism of rhetorical visions of relations with other countries - how they are perceived - the hypothesis about the feeling of external threat as an important factor determining Korean nationalism has been proven. A sense of difference with Japan and then North Korea / Communism have become pillars of (South) Korean identity that do not change easily. What is changing is the intensity of anti-Japanese or anti-North Korean sentiments, but their complete elimination would require a radical change in the very core of the national discourse. This has an impact on bilateral relations, which proves the correctness of the hypothesis about the relationship between national narratives and foreign policy. The perception of Japan as a "Significant Other" influences other possible roles taken by Japan and South Korea. Building a future-oriented relationship is extremely difficult when a common colonial past is a key element in constructing identity. This is a complicated situation which is not made easier by the existence of conflicting rhetorical visions in Japan and South Korea. Understanding the importance of Japan as a "Significant Other" and enemy in Korean identity allows us to understand not only the reasons for the failure of mutual diplomacy, but also to predict the future of the initiatives taken.

By contrast, creating a sense of difference with North Korea forms the basis of a *South* Korean identity that would not have constructed had it not the division of the Korean Peninsula. In this case, ethnic similarity made the communist ideology the main factor of difference. When the Republic of Korea built a strong position in the international arena and achieved economic success, and the Cold War ended, anti-communist slogans ceased to play a significant role. South Korea became so sure of a victory in the rivalry with the DPRK for the legitimacy of power over the Korean people that unification would no longer require coercion in the form of an armed conflict. Contrasting the standard of living of Koreans from both countries began to appear in "unification" narratives, creating a feeling that everyone would voluntarily choose to live in South Korea. North Korea has ceased to pose an ideological threat, instead being a threat to the existing status quo through military advantage. In the unification narratives, attention is drawn to the changed attitude of a new generation of Koreans who have not experienced life in one Korea. Although the very need for unification, resulting precisely from the Korean identity, has not changed, the perception of it has changed: "unification" is understood as cooperation and building mutual trust, and not the actual creation of a single state. The very moment of unification is constantly postponed in time - into the future that is never meant to become the present. For new generations of Koreans, South Korean identity becomes more important than Korean.

This dissertation drew attention to several aspects related to national identity and the narratives that construct it. The South Korean case study indicated that the state does not have a single and unchanging identity. Moreover, those identities influence foreign policy and the behavior of states in the international arena. In international relations and political science, there is still a need to analyze national identity in order to understand state behavior.

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