The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
In-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific...and the world.

Tunneling Through Nationalism: The Phenomenology of a Certain Nationalist　ナショナリズムをくぐり抜けて - あるナショナリストの現象学

Sang Jung Kang, Tessa Morris-Suzuki

Tunneling Through Nationalism: The Phenomenology of a Certain Nationalist

By Kang Sangjung

With an introduction by Tessa Morris-Suzuki

Translation by Mark Gibeau

Introduction

Throughout the modern era, issues of nationalism and national identity have lain at the heart of intellectual debate in Japan, but the contours of the debate have repeatedly changed over time.

From the 1950s onward, as Japan rose from the ashes of defeat to become an economic superpower, visions of ethnic homogeneity and unique culture were widely propagated by the Japanese state and media, and were embraced by a number of commentators in the US and Europe as well as in Japan itself. During the 1990s, this economic and cultural nationalism came under sustained criticism, triggered in part by the collapse of the economic bubble. Yet, far from hastening the demise of nationalism, the two decades of relative economic stagnation from the early 1990s onward were marked by the rise of new and more overtly politicized nationalist ideologies, and by impassioned debates over the nation and its destiny.[1] More recently, some commentators have suggested that a rightward shift is occurring in Japanese intellectual life, bringing together people from opposite ends of the political spectrum into a new nationalist consensus.[2]

For the past two decades or so, Kang Sangjung, who is a second-generation member of the Korean community in Japan and a professor at the University of Tokyo, has been an active and influential participant in debates about nationalism in Japan and beyond. In this article, he reflects on the shifting context and nature of nationalism in Japan, and on changes in his own view of nationalism over the period from the 1970s to the present day. Nationalist discourse (he suggests) needs to be seen in the broader context of economic and political transformations, not only within Japan itself but also on a regional and global scale. From this perspective, the intense debates surrounding nationalism that erupted from the 1990s onward reflect a profound transformation in the relationship between “nation” and “state”: a transformation that demands a deep rethinking of nationalism in the twenty-first century context.

As he explains in the article translated here, Kang’s approach to political ideas has been shaped by his experiences both as a Korean born and brought up in a Japanese provincial city, and as a scholar of political thought (particularly of the ideas of Max Weber) who conducted part of his graduate work in 1980s (West) Germany. His first major contributions to controversies over national identity were a series of articles on the identity of Zainichi Koreans, published in the 1980s[3], and he has since published widely on ideas of nationalism in a global and in a Japanese context.

I first encountered Kang’s ideas on nationalism in a recorded conversation (*taidan*) between Kang and the scholar of social thought Murai Osamu, published in a special issue of the Japanese journal *Gendai Shisō* entitled *Minzoku Mondai no Kigen e* [To the Roots of the Problem of Ethnicity].[4] In retrospect, the timing and content of this special issue seems significant. It appeared in May 1993, at almost exactly the same time as the original version of Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations.*[5] The Soviet Union had recently collapsed, and the Balkans Conflict was reaching its peak. This, in other words, was the moment of the emergence (at least in Europe) of a “post-Cold War” order, when many observers were predicting a decline in ideologically-based global tensions and a revival of conflicts based on ethno-nationalism.

The early 1990s, however, were also the period when new constructivist and post-structuralist ideas were encouraging radical critiques of nationalism. The May 1993 *Gendai Shisō* issue included translations of critical writings by Jacques Derrida and Etiènne Balibar, as well as essays by a number of scholars who would play key roles in the deconstruction of nationalism within Japan (among them Ukai Satoshi, Takahashi Tetsuya and Ueno Toshiya). Kang and Murai’s *taidan*, meanwhile, used Harry Harootunian’s recently published essay “America’s Japan/ Japan’s Japan”[6] as a starting point for exploring the ways in which Japanese ethno-nationalism was entangled and complicit with US power and western orientalism.

By 1993, then, the stage was set for the intense debates over nationalism discussed in Section 4 of “Tunneling through Nationalism”. The temperature was further raised two years later by controversies surrounding the fiftieth anniversary of Japan’s defeat in the Asia-Pacific War. Timid steps by some Japanese politicians towards apologies for the events of the war were followed by a fierce backlash from the right, who revived an ethno-nationalist discourse reminiscent of the 1930s and early 1940s. At the same time, though, the 1990s saw the publication of outstanding Japanese critiques of nationalism, exposing the ideological underpinnings of the myths of cultural uniqueness, and highlighting the paradoxical complicity of Japanese nationalist rhetoric with political subordination to the US. Among these were works like Nishikawa Nagao’s *Kokkyō no Koekata* [How to Cross National Borders][7] and the collection of essays *Nationaru Hisutorī o Koete* [Transcending National History], edited by Komori Yôichi and Takahashi Tetsuya[8].

The 1990s critique of nationalism in Japan was not simply a matter of intellectual debate, but involved a strong element of political activism. The teaching of history had already emerged as a political battleground from the 1960s onward[9], and many of the key participants in the

1990s debates campaigned energetically against the adoption of new nationalistic history and civics textbooks in schools, and against the enforced singing of national anthem at graduation ceremonies and other public occasions. The battle lines, however, were far from simple. This was not a dichotomous divide between nationalists and their critics, but rather a more complex field in which pro- and anti-nationalism was interwoven with diverse attitudes toward issues including Japanese history, the constitution and the security alliance with the United States. Some of these complexities were brought to the surface in 1995, when liberal literary scholar Katô Norihiro published his immensely controversial essay *Haisengoron* [After Defeat], in which he argued that Japan required a clear sense of national identity in order to be able to apologize to other Asian nations for the wrongs committed in wartime.[10] The fierce arguments provoked by this proposal exposed a range of intellectual and emotional dividing lines amongst people seen as being on the liberal-left of the Japanese political spectrum.

Nationalist sentiment in Japan was immensely strengthened in 2002, when revelations about the kidnapping of Japanese citizens by North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) led to an outpouring of media fear and hostility towards the DPRK, in some cases triggering threats and physical attacks on Koreans in Japan seen as sympathetic to the North. The rising tide of nationalism during this period was also influenced by social anxieties stemming from the prolonged economic recession which followed the bursting of the "bubble" in the early 1990s. At the level of state politics, the nationalist ascendancy appeared to reach a peak with the Prime Ministership of Abe Shinzô (who served for one year, from September 2006 to September 2007). Abe's hawkish foreign policy (particularly towards North Korea) and determination to revise Japan's postwar constitution and education laws were underpinned by an intense cultural nationalism, spelled out in his widely sold paperback *Utsukushii Kuni e* [To the Beautiful Country].

Throughout this period, Kang Sangjung actively participated in debates on Japanese nationalism from several angles. His writings included *Orientarizumu no Kanata e* [Beyond Orientalism, 1996][12] and *Nashonarizumu* [Nationalism, 2001][13], both of which offered critical re-examinations of modern nationalist thought in Japan, but also works like *Nicchō Kankei no Kokufuku* [Overcoming Japan-North Korea Relations, 2003][14] and *Higashi Ajia Kyōdō no Ie o Mezashite* [Towards a Common House in East Asia, 2001][15], which argued, in terms of practical contemporary policies, for the normalization of relations with the DPRK and the creation of a Northeast Asian regional community. The second of these themes, closely related to Wada Haruki's proposals for Northeast Asian regionalism[16], forms an important element in the article translated here.

His approach, however, has always been a distinctive one. As a South Korean national born, brought up and resident in Japan, he directs his critique of nationalism towards Korea as well as towards Japan, often pointing to the complex ways in which Japanese and South Korean nationalism are historically intertwined and re-enforce one another. (Although, as in this article, his criticism also recognizes the power relationships which differentiate the nationalism of former colony from that of former colonizer).[17] He strongly believes in the importance of communicating with a broad popular audience, and much of his work, particularly in the past ten years, has appeared in media outlets (local as well as national) that lie outside the normal circuits of academic debate. His popular writings have included recorded discussions with a wide range of people, including those with political views far removed from his own[18], and also increasingly include works written in novelistic semi-fictional form.[19] Kang's works (including the article translated here) also express a multi-layered response to the complex phenomenon of nationalism: a desire to understand its economic and social wellsprings; a profound hostility to state mobilization of ethnonationalist symbols and passions; but also a recognition of, and a certain sympathy for, the human desire for community and the longing for a place to call home.[20]

If the early 1990s marked the start of a new phase in Japan's ongoing *nashonarizumu ronsō* [nationalism debate], the period from 2009 onward may come to be seen as marking a shift to a further phase whose outlines are not yet clearly defined. Events on the political stage have had a deep impact on the contours of public discourse in Japan. The 2009 advent of a Democratic Party government, after over half a century of almost uninterrupted Liberal Democratic Party dominance, was welcomed by many people as opening up new domestic and international possibilities for Japan. But the rapid collapse of the Hatoyama administration and the problems that have beset the Democratic Party regime ever since have left many feeling deeply disillusioned. In global terms (as Kang emphasizes) US hegemony seems in irreversible decline, yet the Japanese government appears unable to find any policy alternative to the US strategic embrace.

In some respects, the power of cultural nationalism seems to have diminished since the 1990s. Japanese audiences enthusiastically embrace the Korean and Chinese popular culture which reaches them via expanding cross-border media flows. Within the sphere of mass culture, interaction between Japan and its Asian neighbours is far closer than it was ten or fifteen years ago. But cultural transnationalism co-exists with the rise of populist nationalism, particularly at the level of prefectural and city governments, and has recently triggered an overtly racist backlash, played out above all on the social networks of the Internet age.[21] Meanwhile, efforts to resist the state imposition of obeisance to the national symbols of flag and anthem are repeatedly frustrated. The 1990s critique of nationalism could, indeed, be said to have triumphed in the realm of logic, only to fail in the realm of practical politics. The fact that nations and ethnicities are constructed rather than natural, and that national symbols and traditions are invented, is now widely accepted. But people continue to hate and fight in their name regardless.

In Japan, the disaster that has unfolded since the tsunami of 11 March 2011 has added a new twist to the nationalism debate: on the one hand, deepening many people's mistrust of the national government, while on the other evoking the rhetoric of national community – *ganbare Nippon!* – as a rallying cry for recovery.

In his media comments on the disaster, Kang Sangjung has not only exposed failures in the company and government response to the nuclear crisis and called for regional cooperation to develop alternatives to nuclear power[22], but has also sought to shift attention from the national to the local human dimensions of the event, which he defines not as a "national disaster" [*kokunan*] but as a "people's disaster" [*minnan*].[23]

US power declines; the global financial system sinks further into crisis; regional power shifts challenge Japan's economic dominance in East Asia. In this uncertain world, how can we find effective ways to resist a mass retreat to the psychological fortresses of ethno-nationalism and racism? The essay translated here provides no simple answers to this question, but offers both theoretical and personal reflections on the changing forms and persisting power of nationalism in Japan, while also pointing to the outlines of one possible path beyond the ethnonationalist hatreds of an age of globalization.TMS•

がんばれ
NIPPON
日本

Tunnelling Through Nationalism: The Phenomenology of a Certain Nationalist

What is nationalism? How does one answer such a primitive yet essential question? As a member of one of Japan's ethnic minorities, to me it is both an academic and an existential problem.

In this essay I will draw on the world systems approach of Immanuel Wallerstein and other theories to trace the transformation of the East Asian order in the post war period while simultaneously discussing my own transformation from pre-nationalist to nationalist and post-nationalist. I will outline the processes by which an East Asia baptised into nationalism might tunnel through that nationalism to emerge on the far side, in what we may call an East Asian Common House: a loose, cooperative regionalist community connecting North East Asia and South East Asia. The conclusion I reach in the present essay is that this kind of regional integration has the potential to attenuate nationalist rivalries in East Asia.

1. From Gesellschaft to Gemeinschaft

Why must we begin any examination of nationalism with the question of what constitutes the object of enquiry? What is the object of enquiry? The problem is not simply that the object is unclear at the start of the examination; even at its end we cannot expect a single, univocal definition to emerge. Still, what is clear is that the concept of nationalism does exist, and that it contains within it an excess of images. Nationalism is known to all as a household word: yet it lacks definition. Why does nationalism in particular embody such paradoxes? It would seem that simply labelling a phenomenon as "nationalism" is sufficient to bring nationalism into existence. Whether you define nationalism as a discourse or see it as a specific form of social consciousness, it remains nonetheless a highly volatile phenomenon. Like a mercurial, explosive liquid, the phenomenon of nationalism is unstable, fleeting and transitory.

If nationalism is such a volatile phenomenon, why do nationalists see it as an unshakable and eternal "destiny"? We can liken nationalism to the shimmering of the air on a hot day: ephemeral and trembling, rising like a flame from diffracting light. Yet, as we all know, these heat shimmers are only the product of warm air, rising from a patch of earth heated by the sun's rays. They live for but a moment. When air of a different density is introduced into the rising flow, the light passing through is diffracted into an array of colours. It is as though the display were designed specifically to deceive the eyes of the onlookers. If nationalism is akin to these heat shimmers, what are the powerful rays of light that cause the shimmering?

Even if nationalism is not solely a product of the modern era, but is predicated on the "ethnies" of previous ages[24], there can be no denying that the constructivist approach is highly effective when analysing this phenomenon. Whether one stands in opposition to nationalism or supports it, there seems to be a consensus regarding the efficacy of constructivism as a framework of understanding. Despite the rhetorical emphasis on the persistence and immortality of nationalism, there remains a shared understanding that nationalism was discovered at a specific point in time, and that it was created and is constantly being re-created. With that in mind, how do we go about developing an argument about nationalism's origins, development and movement? If nationalism can be likened to the shimmering of the air, perhaps we ought to look outside of nationalism for the source of that iridescence.

The best-known version of this somewhat external, objective explanation can be found in the world systems theory developed by Immanuel Wallerstein and others. According to Wallerstein, the modern world system (the global capitalist economy) was formed as a class-based society [*gesellschaft*]. Yet, to justify its own structure, while destroying a range of historically extant communities [*gemeinschaften*], this world system simultaneously constructed new forms of *gemeinschaft* which resembled status groups (race, nation, peoples, ethnic groups, religious groups, etc.). Thus the modern period is not, as one might expect, a movement from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*, but rather the opposite: it is a movement from *gesellschaft* to *gemeinschaft*.

If the above holds true, then the cultural role of nationalism in the construction of difference must be reconsidered. However much we may emphasise the role of nationalism in ethnic identity creation, language revival and cultural differentiation, in situations where such phenomena do not serve class interests, status group formation may take non-ethnic forms, such as the creation of religious identity groups. So (for example) we can see cases of shifts within a few decades from pan-Turkic to pan-Islamic movements, and then to nationalist- or class-based movements. Thus we cannot simply look at one section of the process and conclude that it is an "ethnic revival".

Still, nationalism is not simply a reflection of the social reality of the world system. Like the shimmering produced by the diffraction of light, nationalism too appears in an almost infinite number of different guises. That is, unified forms of shared status identity such as ethnicity are not unequivocally fixed. Rather, they are given their specific form by the adhesive force of the subjective moment. The result is a broad spectrum of innumerable gradations.

On this point Wallerstein makes the half-ironic comment that, "Far from *gemeinschaften* dying out, they have never been stronger, more complex, more overlapping and competitive, more determinative of our lives. And yet never have they been less legitimate... Our *gemeinschaften* are, if you will, our loves that dare not speak their names."[25] Research on nationalism must untangle these cryptic paradoxes from within as well as from without.

Here, as a preliminary approach to this kind of internal/external understanding of nationalism, I would like to talk about my personal transitions against the backdrop of the various historical stages of nationalism in Japan and East Asia. Setting aside the question of whether or not ontogeny (the development of the individual) recapitulates phylogeny (the development of the whole group or system), I believe that discussing shifts in personal experience in the context of the world system social reality will highlight the contradictions inherent to nationalism. It is also for this reason that I have selected "Phenomenology of a Certain Nationalist" for my subtitle.

2. Pre-Nationalist

It is necessary to pass through a number of different intermediary stages before the nation or state and their traditions and histories come to occupy a central position in one's self-consciousness, endowing one with a sense of affiliation and difference from others. I was born during the Korean War and I passed my youth--until my adolescence—in the age of the Pax Americana. The world economy was being run according to the Bretton Woods system, with post-war America and the overwhelming power of the U.S. dollar at its centre. A Keynesian welfare state with a Fordist system of production and consumption at its core accompanied the spread of Americanism throughout the world. This system pushed the former Axis powers of Japan, West Germany and Italy to unprecedented levels of growth and by 1968 Japan had surpassed West Germany's GNP and had become the number two economic power in the Western camp.

At the same time, the U.S. superpower became bogged down in the Vietnam War and was shaken by the turmoil brought on by the growing civil rights and student power movements. The intensification of the Cold War and the prosperity of former Axis powers gave Japan a highly strategic position in Asia. In the United States the views of such people as Edwin Reischauer and Walt Rostow gained traction as they promoted Japan as a model case of Asian modernization and of the spread of American-style mass consumerism. In this way, as Japan grew increasingly dependent upon the U.S. both militarily and politically, it also came to occupy a central position in the world system hierarchy, and was resurrected as a major regional power in Asia.

Standing in stark contrast to Japan's re-emergence was the former colonial state of Korea. Impoverished by civil war and its subsequent partition, it was only after the military coup d'état of 1961 that a developmental dictatorship style of modernisation finally commenced. This divided nation on the periphery of the world system was, as a result of pressure from Japan and the U.S., positioned at the front line of anti-communism and was subjected to the violent oppression of state-sponsored information politics. America, Japan, and Korea, with an "imposed anti-communist internationalism" in the latter, served as the base for the peculiarly stable postwar international hierarchical order of centre, semi-periphery and periphery.

This Cold War structure concealed postcolonial histories and forced former colonizing states and former colonized states alike to adopt unitary national identities. Thus *Zainichi* Koreans, who existed as a minority stranded in their former coloniser's state, were put in an excruciatingly difficult position. In Japan they were discriminated against as "history's refuse" and forced into a pariah-like role. At the same time, they were scorned by Koreans as "half Japanese" (*panchoppari*) or "ethnic dropouts". Born in the state of their former coloniser and speaking Japanese as their native tongue, second-generation *Zainichi* Koreans found themselves caught in a crushing vise, trapped in ambivalence between the suzerain and the colonised state.

At the time, the towering shadow of Pax Americana continued to loom over East Asia despite the U.S. becoming increasingly trapped in the quagmire of the Vietnam War. America retained its hegemonic position in virtually every field: politics, military, the economy, culture, etc. Under America's protection, and thanks in no small part to special military procurements during the Korean and Vietnam Wars, Japan continued with its transformation into an economic regional power. Thus, despite being castrated militarily, Japan was on its way to becoming America's greatest ally as East Asia's dominant regional power.

While Japan underwent its transformation, Korea--located on the periphery of the world system--became a satellite state as an American military supply base. With the conclusion of the Japan-Korea treaty of normalization in 1965, it also began to receive economic assistance from its former coloniser and to embark on its project of modernisation via the developmental dictatorship model. In contrast to Japan's interaction with South Korea, however, there was no attempt to settle accounts with North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and diplomatic relations between the two countries remain severed.

Thrown into this tumultuous environment, Zainichi Koreans found themselves being twisted and bent as the opposing powers grated and shoved against one another. While existing as an ethnic minority in Japan, they nonetheless precisely reproduced the Korean North-South division. Not only were Zainichi Koreans forced to continue to occupy a subservient colonial position in Japan and survive in a situation that replicated the North-South division of their homeland, they also had to deal with a wide range of unresolved problems within their own community such as a lingering paternalistic social structure, gender inequality and so on. The pariah-like existence of the Zainichi Koreans was further disrupted by sensational incidents of self-destructive violence: the Komatsukawa Incident[26], whose central figure was Yi Jin-U, and the Kim Hi-ro Incident[27]. It was inevitable that the unresolved postcolonial issues of postwar Japan should erupt into such periodic criminal incidents.

Amidst this oppressive reality I sought only to escape from all things ethnic or national. At the same time I felt internally incomplete. I found myself overcome by a sense of drifting--not unlike what one senses in lachrymose, romantic sentimentality. Drifting aimlessly in this faintly ironical sorrow, unable to decide on a course of action and unbound by any commitment, I had a freedom which seemed like that of the prewar so-called "leisured intellectuals" [*kōtō yūmin*]. Of course, in my case, that freedom was confined to a small space with a radius of only a few meters. I ensconced myself in that space and peered out at the world through a tiny gap in the wall. I rejected the world even as I ceaselessly and desperately sought for something to connect me to that world. So, consumed and troubled by ambivalence, there was no room for even the smallest particle of nationalism in that second generation *Zainichi* Korean.

3. A disease called Nationalism

As I slumbered, lulled by my counterfeit feelings of romanticism, the 1970's arrived. I visited Korea at the moment when it was being dragged into the orbit of a developmental dictatorship. It was then that I experienced an important transition. The distant seeds of our present-day financial crisis were then being sown in the form of the "Nixon shock". The postwar economic system was under assault and confidence in the standard currency--the US dollar--was beginning to wobble. The suspension of the direct convertibility of the dollar into gold, the ultimate bastion of support for value, the drain of the Vietnam war on the value of the dollar, and the consequent chronic deficits in US account balances all served to reveal that the framework of the economic superpower was being shaken. The move to a variable exchange rate system enhanced the incentive for the international flow of capital, and we began to understand the powerful influence that currency, finance, exchange policies and the like hold over the real economy.

At the same time, in economic terms, the world was becoming multipolar. The emergence of Western Europe and Japan supported a tri-polar structure of global capitalism centred on the US, Japan and Europe. With the summit meetings of the mid-1970s, this cooperative structure took on a more concrete form. Japan occupied a privileged position in world finance and was largely unaffected by the stagflation that swept across Europe and the United States, leaving long-term economic malaise in its wake. The country was therefore able to overcome the oil shock of 1973 and focused on making its position as an economic superpower permanent. The result was that cultural nationalism, now linked to economic nationalism, resonated throughout Japan as consciousness of Japan's superpower status grew.

This was not a statist nationalism that focused itself on the political realm, but rather it was an anti-political or apolitical nationalism embedded in the economy, society and culture. It was a nationalism grounded in the newly-emerging fields of consumer culture and popular culture--themselves products of Japan's rapid transformation into a mass-consumption society. It was, in other words, the sediment of a national consciousness atomised by consumerism, which settled and came to form the foundation upon which long-term conservative rule was established. In Korea, by contrast, the split between dictator and people was becoming clearer and the country was approaching a season of intense politics. The echoes of that season reached the ears and minds of the *Zainichi*, resulting, for many of them, in an "ethnic awakening".

In Japan, the protest movements against the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty of 1970 were dying down and violent political eruptions on both the radical right (the Mishima incident[28]) and on the radical left (the Red Army incident[29]) were breathing their last. With radical political factions receding into the background, political forces began to collapse into a more general, centrist position. A new, "catch-all" system of

politics was coming into being: a system that sought to encompass everything while simultaneously maintaining internal discrimination and difference. *Zainichi* Koreans, excluded from this catch-all system, were brought together by what Benedict Anderson calls "long distance nationalism". They had no choice but to try to find their own escape route by becoming attached to a quasi-conceptual democracy.

I too was drawn in by this force, and recited the mantra of "ethnic nationalism = democracy=reunification". I bade farewell to my gloomy fixation on romantic sentimentalism and threw myself into student movements opposing the dictatorship and supporting an ethnically unified democracy in Korea. At the time "ethnicity" [*minzoku / minjok*] seemed to be a magical word, capable of solving all of our problems. To liberals and the left our support for an ethnically-based nationalism no doubt seemed like an absurd anachronism. However, to *Zainichi* Koreans the word "ethnicity", remote though it may have been from everyday experience, shone with a bright and inviting aura.

My bias toward ethnicity and my increased consciousness of belonging to a specific ethnic group allowed me to construct an internal barricade, separating me from the outside world. I moved from what I felt to be a "false" identity to a "true" identity. To exaggerate somewhat, you could say that I experienced this as a Copernican revolution, as something akin to a religious conversion.

So was this spiritual elevation simply a temporary "illness"? Does it deserve the scornful label, to misquote Lenin, of "right-wing infantilism"? No, I do not think so. Even were we to see it as an "illness", that does not make it mere delusion, nor does it make the ideas empty words. What other means remained to the *Zainichi* Koreans, besides the "illness" of nationalism, to affirm their own existence? We had been discriminated against, excluded, forcibly uprooted and expelled from the community. Ought we to have assimilated into the majority? Should we have assimilated into a class that transcended ethnicity and race? Or should we have tried to better ourselves and transformed ourselves into cosmopolitan global citizens? To the extent that we were not in a position to choose those options it was quite natural that we should have been attracted to the "illness" of nationalism.

However, this raises the question of why, knowing that it was an "illness", I chose nationalism in the first place and clung to it with such resolve. At that time I did not see nationalism as an "illness". On the contrary, it seemed to me the very embodiment of health. Over time, however, I came to realise that nationalism was an "illness" that drives its sufferers mad. This awakening was not unlike a patient discovering a portal to a new world and, by means of this new perspective, becoming aware for the first time of the unnatural "illness" with which he is afflicted.

For me, this transition occurred when I left Japan to live in a small corner of Europe. There I was able to witness directly the tragic aftermath of the diasporas, the dispersal and coalescing of peoples and races. I came to appreciate that the "sufferings" (*leiden*) of *Zainichi* Koreans was not specific to Koreans. Rather, it was a tragic condition into which myriad peoples throughout history have fallen. It was at this moment that I first became aware of the "the world" as well as its past as "world history". That is, for the first time, I was able to view the history of the Korean people from a new perspective and in a new light. It was as though I were peering through the wrong end of a telescope. From this vantage point, the individual sufferings of the Korean people retreated into the distance and merged with the sufferings of other peoples. It was as though the innumerable individual streams of suffering of all the different peoples joined together to form the river of "world history". When I realised this, I distanced myself from nationalism and made a different choice.

As it happens, it was right around this time that the Keynesian welfare state was in decline and the neo-liberal reforms that sowed the seeds for the current global financial crisis were emerging. Then, ten years later socialism crumbled and, as though to fill the subsequent void, Islamic fundamentalism appeared and the Iranian Revolution was played out on the world stage.

4. Beyond Nationalism

After the oil shock of the 1970s made the shift from Fordism to Post-Fordism irreversible, capital, money and information transcended national boundaries, moving freely throughout the world. Nationalism seemed to become something of a throwback: the ghost of a previous age. From the mid-1980's I also began to put down roots in the locality where I lived and, in the process of "implanting" my family in that locality, I gradually came to distance myself from my previous partiality for "ethnic nationalism." Additionally, through my readings in sociology, history, literary criticism and post-colonialism, I encountered a variety of critical discourses on the nation state and national culture. I turned this critical evaluation of paradoxes onto myself and embarked on a kind of self-dissection.

Yet the path of history is unpredictable. At the very moment I was embracing the subjective problem of "dis-enchanting" nationalism, a new phenomenon one could call nationalism began to sweep across Japan. It could, I suppose, be seen as a "virtual phenomenon"--dependent as it was upon the media and the Internet. In this sense, simply by defining it as a nationalist phenomenon may make it a sort of "self-declared nationalism". Or, though we characterise it as nationalism, perhaps we are just dressing up a variety of phenomena in the garb of nationalism. In some cases this may have involved an ironic acceptance of media phenomena as nationalism when, in reality, what we were seeing was the manifestation of a variety of individual and social demands. In any event, there can be no denying that some sort of nationalism more firmly focused on the state was beginning to spread. Why did this phenomenon appear? To understand this we must first revisit the classical definition of nationalism.

To borrow from Ernest Gellner, nationalism can be thought of as a political principle that attempts to match the political unit with the cultural unit.[30] Gellner's analysis is obviously predicated on the assumption that the state emerged in the form it did so that it could deal with industrialisation, the one underlying force from which so much else emerges. In contrast to agricultural societies, the modern industrial society is defined by an egalitarianism that is itself a by-product of the social fluidity of industrial societies. All members of this society are expected to possess basic skills: literacy, numeracy, basic work habits and technical skills, familiarity with essential social skills. A new trans-personal mode of communication, which does not depend on social context, is necessary to cultivate these skills. That is to say, these skills can only develop where a shared, standardised written and spoken language exists. Clearly it is the modern nation state that develops high culture based on the ability to speak and write the common language. Through instruction in language and culture, the nation state holds a monopoly over the "quality control" of the production of useful and adaptable people (through education). It is for this reason, Gellner asserts, that without the existence of the state, the question of nationalism would never arise.

In this sense, a nationalism in which human communities are organized into large, collectively educated and culturally homogeneous units is not the result of an ideological misstep or an impulsive excess, but rather is the inevitable product of the attempt to match the political with the cultural. State and society are joined, and a fictive system called "unified national culture"--in which all members live, talk and produce--is constructed.

One aspect of this fictive unification, in the case of Japan, was the identification of centre and region, and the assumption that one's native locality (*patrie*) was equivalent to the nation as represented by the centre. In the modern nation state, and particularly in the Meiji state, there were in fact ongoing frictions between centre and regions. But during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars the state prospered, and regional societies supported that prosperity. Thus for a while the optical illusion was established that the prosperity of the nation state and the prosperity of local regions operated in harmony.

To be sure, Gellner's analysis of the origins of nationalism relies on a highly rational interpretation. It does not address the irrationality of nationalism. How nationalism spurs people to such zeal that they willingly go to their own deaths in its name is not explained. Nor does he account for the temporal lag that exists between the emergence of industrialisation and the sudden rise of nationalism. Having said that, however, Gellner's important contributions to our understanding of nationalism are beyond question. His analysis presents us with the processes by which the political unit of the modern world has become legitimised as the "nation-state" (two elements joined by a hyphen): from the social policies and corporatist bureaucratic state of Germany's Second Reich, to the Anglo-Saxon welfare state in the period of total war (under the Beveridge Plan) and to the postwar Fordist regimes of accumulation and the Keynesian social welfare state. In this sense, Gellner's analysis is very compelling.

If we see Gellner's nationalism as "classical nationalism", then we are confronted with another problem: that the very foundations of the society he describes are now being dismantled. The spreading anxiety and malaise that accompanies globalisation is the result of globalisation's "liquefaction" of social foundations and the resultant collapse or vanishing of society. Under classical nationalism, legitimacy depended upon the union of state and society. Now that legitimacy is collapsing as societies fall to pieces and disperse like so many atoms. It seems that the universal "regime of desire" better known as "the market" has brought about a situation where the state and society can be unified, if at all, only by external pressure.

The homogeneity cultivated and imposed by the irresistible, objective demands of industrialisation can be seen as having been expressed in the form of nationalism. But now the homogeneous social infrastructure that underpins nationalism is on the brink of utter collapse. So, why is it that nationalism seems to be on the rise? To answer this we must first recognise that when we discuss nationalism, its meaning will inevitably differ depending upon what we emphasise. It will mean one thing if we stress the concept of "nation' implied by Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" and something quite different if we focus instead on Weber's "state" as an "*anstalt*" [institution] with a "monopoly on the use of legitimate violence."

This element of ambivalence can be seen in the hyphen that links the two words "nation-state", and it extends to cover the area of the "nation"--a space that can be seen as roughly identical with society. In order to meet the demands of industrialisation, the state sought to integrate itself with society and mobilise human resources by promoting universal literacy, numeracy, and technical skills, as well as a general "improvement" of the population. While serving as a model for economic development and regimes of accumulation, postwar Fordism and Keynesianism also functioned as the integrating principles behind unified national economies.

As I have mentioned, however, we are already at a stage where, in the embrace of globalisation and the liberalisation of finance in particular, we are busily dismantling the foundations upon which the unified national economy is based. The link between state and society is crumbling. The state is separating itself from the nation and transforming itself into an agent for the global regime of accumulation. As a result, not only is the state withdrawing from its monopoly on the "quality control of the production of people" (education), it is also cutting the umbilical cord connecting it to society by withdrawing from welfare and medicine, superannuation and employment, and other areas essential to the reproduction of social life. It is moving, in short, from "government" [*seifu*] to a form of "rule" or "control" [*tōchi*], involving a wider structure encompassing both the state and key figures in civil society. What we have is not a "credit crunch" but rather the phenomenon of a "public crunch". Nationalism as the glue which once transcended class and unified the people is being weakened at its very foundations.

Hannah Arendt saw this kind of situation, in which the masses have "lost their connection with others and become defined by their rootlessness," as the indispensable precondition for totalitarian rule. Arendt defines this condition of the masses as "*verlassenheit*", loneliness, or the state of being abandoned:

> What prepares men for totalitarian domination in the non-totalitarian world is the fact that loneliness [*verlassenheit*], once a borderline experience usually suffered in certain marginal social conditions like old age, has become the everyday experience of the ever-growing masses of our century. The merciless process into which totalitarianism drives and organizes the masses looks like a suicidal escape from this reality. The "ice-cold reasoning" and the "mighty tentacle" of dialectics which "seizes you as in a vice" seems like the last support in a world where nobody is reliable and nothing can be relied upon.[31]

In Japan, the national broadcaster NHK's special documentary entitled The Working Poor depicts the plight of a thirty-five year old homeless man who is reduced to spending his days sifting through rubbish bins. He searches for magazines in the hope that he might convert them into enough money for a cup of convenience store instant ramen. It is a telling story that reveals the spread of "*verlassenheit*" among the younger generation of that ostensibly wealthy country: Japan.

I am overcome by a sense of déjà vu when I consider the predicament of these young people: abandoned by society and left no alternative but to abandon themselves. It bears a close resemblance to the situation of the *Zainichi* Korean ethnic minority in the 1970's. This recent social phenomenon of the working poor is nothing more than a new manifestation of the "*verlassenheit*" of Japanese citizens who are now becoming "*Zainichi*-fied", turned into pariahs. This repetition indicates that the principle of a single, homogeneous unity upon which the nation is based has become virtually meaningless and that another kind of invisible apartheid is emerging.

If that is the case we have no choice but to recognise that the social foundation for the "nation" no longer exists in contemporary nationalism. Rather we are left with a "nationalism without nationals" or a "post-national nationalism". All we have is a nationalism with the state at its centre. Ironically, the socially unifying force of "state nationalism" is left as the only force that can contain both the anti-social conditions created by *verlassenheit* and the "organized *verlassenheit*" that destroys all social relationships (i.e. the violence and terror of totalitarianism).

But the national state, transformed into the agent of neo-liberal capitalist plunder, now no longer has the least iota of justification for its claim to unite the people of the nation. Today, the social basis of the nationalism on which citizens relied is destroyed, and forcibly imposed loyalty to the state alone is lauded as "patriotism". What a distortion, what a deception this is! We are confronted by the spectacle of desolated home communities (*patries*), rural areas being torn apart, the land of the nation laid waste, and at the same time, servile and blind obedience to the state, accompanied by xenophobic nationalism.

As this transformation in the nature of nationalism has become obvious, I have finally come to think that it might be possible not so much to overcome or transcend nationalism, but rather to burrow through it, to tunnel down and discover a passage that will lead us out, on to the far side, beyond nationalism. That is, it is not simply a matter of repudiating nationalism as an "illness" or of unthinkingly embracing it. Rather, by digging the well as deep as it will go, I believe that we might find ourselves on another path to the other side of nationalism.

Conclusion – The Northeast Asian Common House

With the current enormous shifts in global capitalism, which may be described as the prelude to global economic crisis, what transformations will be wrought on existing states and nationalism? This is the question I find myself thinking about most often. At the end of this phenomenological examination of a nationalist, this question of future destinations is a particularly critical one.

The perilous situation of global capitalism, perched on the brink of world crisis, is an indisputable indication that the "Pax Americana" is drawing to a close. The age of Americanism that so defined the twentieth century is coming to an end. The end of the Cold War was not the end of history, but rather the end of the Pax Americana. At the same time, the financial crisis has shown us--quite unexpectedly--how utterly powerless states are to control the arrogant movement of capital as it straddles national borders. Indeed the crisis revealed that the state, in its new role as an agent for capital, can and will operate against the interests of the nation.

Yet, despite all this, the end of the state has not begun. The nation, as before, remains the most critical, the most important embodiment of *gesellschaft* and the most critical and the most important embodiment of *gemeinschaft*. So, what will be the future of nationalism? If nationalism is a complex of ideas and movements that aims to maintain the existence of the nation and that gives shape to the state (as political protective membrane of the nation), then nationalism must be prepared to deal with the greatest threat to the nation: capitalism run amok. Unless this issue is addressed it will not be possible to avoid the fate of utter collapse that has already been visited upon those small and mid-sized states once lionised as models of globalisation.

So, it is not simply a matter of rejecting nationalism. We must consider how we can both integrate nationalism and take its core ideals to a different level. Surely a way of doing this is through a regionalism which would create a broader space for the free interchange of people and information, capital and technology across borders; for such regionalism would maintain the sovereignty of the state while, at the same time, attenuating ethnocentric nationalism and opening up the state to a wider shared ownership. One part of this process of regionalisation involves digging down as deep as possible into the well of local home communities – *patries* – and thus opening up tunnels to a region-wide transnational network of *patries*.

At the beginning of the post-America era the world is divided into four poles: a regionalism emerging from the loose solidarity between the EU and Russia; the regionalism surrounding North and South America; African regionalism; and finally the regionalism of East Asia. Might not this era be a time when those four poles begin to negotiate and cooperate with one another on a global level? Of course, it goes without saying that Japan and Korea belong to the East Asian pole. Through the cooperation of South East Asia and North East Asia, and with the contributions of Japan, China and Korea in North East Asia in particular, the East Asia pole will prove to be immensely important to the future of the region.

An important possibility here is the notion of a "North East Asian Common House", which refers to the structure of a regionalist order with these three countries at its centre. The three countries at the core of Northeast Asia – China, Japan and South Korea – by themselves produce some 20% of the world's GNP. There has never before been a region that has experienced such rapid economic growth. Besides, trade within the region and particularly between Japan and China has already exceeded Japan-US trade in scale. With investment and trade expanding, there can be no doubt that sooner or later this region will become a single economic sphere, even if in an informal rather than in an institutionalised sense.

Yet there are few places in the world where the political rivalry between nations is as intense as in Northeast Asia. On the one hand, the economic interdependence and cultural flows are rapidly growing, but on the other profound conflicts over security and resources are becoming more and more evident year by year. Why has it so far been impossible to establish a regional security framework and mechanisms to promote mutual trust in Northeast Asia? One reason has been discord in terms of historical consciousness. I have discussed this problem in greater detail elsewhere[32], so will refer only briefly to it here. However, it is worth mentioning simply that with the rapid spread of democratisation and new information networks, it becomes easier for nationalism to be popularly disseminated, and this has aggravated the problem.

The second reason for the failure to create common security frameworks is the fact that in Northeast Asia the Cold War has not yet fully come to an end. Since the Korean War armistice was signed at Panmunjom on 27 July 1953, more than half a century has passed without progress towards the signing of a peace treaty. In other words, Northeast Asia's "post-war world" was created without coming to terms with the history of what might be termed an ongoing "semi-world war" situation. In this postwar regional order, the United States served as a hub, and the only relationships that developed were an agglomeration of bilateral relationships between the US and Japan, the US and South Korea, the US and North Korea, the US and China etc. There are many situations where negotiations between the neighbouring countries of the region cannot proceed smoothly without the US acting as intermediary: a situation that Columbia University professor Carol Gluck has termed "the bilateralism syndrome".

In 2003, however, an important experiment in creating a multilateral framework for security and for promoting mutual trust was established. This was the Six Party Talks on North Korean denuclearisation. If the framework established by the Six Party Talks (themselves a move toward the end of the Cold War) can be mobilized in the future, we can envision the creation of an ANEAN (Association of North East Asian Nations), consisting of Japan, China, North and South Korea, the U.S. and Russia, and serving as a counterpart to ASEAN. If this can be achieved, then the contours of the East Asia pole will become visible.

With the inclusion of America (as an Asia-Pacific nation), Russia (as part of the Far East) and North Korea, the North East Asia Common House would surely constitute a core entity in East Asia. If each nation, while sharing their national sovereignties, created a broader regional base, we might see nationalism finally released from the yoke of ethnocentrism. The result, one imagines, could be a transformation from ethnocentric nationalism to a kind of shared nationalism premised on coexistence. Of course this vision of the future could be criticised as being over-optimistic. Yet, we cannot use reality as a tool for criticizing reality. It is in ideals that we find an alternative; and as we stand on the precipice of global crisis, confronted by unprecedented dangers, we should not dismiss those ideals out of hand as a "fool's dream."

An earlier Japanese version of this essay was published in Ōsawa Masachi and Kang Sangjung eds., Nashonarizumu Ron Nyūmon*, Tokyo, Yuhikaku, August 2009. The version published here is revised and expanded.*

Kang Sangjung is a Professor specialising in political theory and inter-Asia relations in the Interfaculty Initiative in Information Studies, University of Tokyo*. His most recent works include* Omoni *(2010) and* Rīdā wa Hanpo mae o Aruke: Kim Dae-jung to iu Hito *(2009).*

Tessa Morris-Suzuki is Professor of Japanese History in the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University*. Her most recent works include* Borderline Japan: Foreigners and Frontier Controls in the Postwar Era *(2010) and* To the Diamond Mountains: A Hundred Year Journey Through China and Korea *(2010).*

Mark Gibeau is a Lecturer in the Japanese Studies in the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University. *His research interests focus on postwar Japanese literature with particular emphasis on the work of Abe Kōbō. His literary translations include works by Kawabata Yasunari, Kakuda Mitsuyo, Yamamoto Shūgorō and Komatsu Sakyō.*

Recommended citation: Kang Sangjung, 'Tunneling Through Nationalism: The Phenomenology of a Certain Nationalist with an introduction by Tessa Morris-Suzuki,' The Asia-Pacific Journal *Vol 9, Issue 36 No 2, September 5, 2011*

Notes

[1] Laura Hein, "The Cultural Career of the Japanese Economy: Developmental and Cultural Nationalisms in Historical Perspective", *Japan Focus*, 26 June 2008.

[2] For example, Kim Gwang-sang, "'Sato Masaru gensho' hihan," *Impaction*, No 160, November 2007

[3] For essays by Kang and other participants in this controversy, see Iinuma Jirō ed., *Zainichi Kankoku Chōsenjin: Sono Nihon Shakai ni okeru Sonzai Kachi*, Osaka, Kaifūsha, 1988.

[4] Kang Sangjung and Murai Osamu, "Ran-Hansha suru Orientarizumu", *Gendai Shisō*, May 2003, pp. 182-197.

[5] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer, 1993, pp. 22-49; this essay was later incorporated in Huntington's book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996.

[6] H. D. Harootunian, "America's Japan / Japan's Japan", in Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian eds., *Japan in the World*, Durham N.C., Duke University Press, 1993, 196-221.

[7] Nishikawa Nagao, *Kokkyō no Koekata*, Tokyo, Chikuma Shobō, 1992.

[8] Komori Yôichi and Takahashi Tetsuya, *Nashonaru Hisutorī o Koete*, Tokyo, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998.

[9] From 1965 onward, historian Ienaga Saburō filed a series of suits against the Japanese Ministry of Education, which had demanded changes to history textbooks that he had authored. During the 1980s, the textbook controversies became international, as China and other Asian counties protested reported plans by the Japanese government to replace the word "invasion" in descriptions of Japan's role in the Asia-Pacific War with the word "advance". These controversies formed the background to the protests over nationalist textbooks in the second half of the 1990s. See Ienaga Saburō (trans. Richard H. Minear), *Japan's Past, Japan's Future: One Historian's Odyssey*, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001; Laura Hein and Mark Selden eds., *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany and the United States*, Armonk, M. E. Sharpe, 2000.

[10] Katō Norihiro, *Haisengoron*, Tokyo, Kōdansha, 1997; the three essays contained in this book were originally published as journal articles between 1995 and 1997.

[11] Abe Shinzō, *Utsukushii Kuni e*, Tokyo, Bungei Shunjūsha, 2006; Kang Sangjung's *Aikoku no Sahō* (Tokyo, Asahi Shinsho, 2006), published a few months later, can be read as a response to Abe.

[12] Kang Sangjung, *Orientarizumu no Kanata e*, Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 1996.

[13] Kang Sangjung, *Nashonarizumu*, Tokyo, Iwanami Shoten, 2001.

[14] Kang Sangjung, *Nicchō Kankei no Kokufuku*, Tokyo, Shūeisha Shinsho, 2003.

[15] Kang Sangjung, *Higashi Ajia Kyōdō no Ie o Mezashite*, Tokyo, Heibonsha, 2001.

[16] See Wada Haruki, *Tōhoku Ajia Kyōdō no Ie: Shin-Chiikishugi Sengen*, Tokyo, Heibonsha, 2003.

[17] For Kang Sangjung and Hyun Mooam, *Dai-Nihon, Manshū Teikoku no Isan*, Tokyo, Kōdansha, 2010.

[18] For example, Tawara Sōichirō, Kang Sangjung and Nishibe Susumu, *Aikokushin*, Tokyo, Kōdansha, 2003; Kaneko Masaru, Kang Sangjung, Kim Mirei, Kobayashi Yoshinori et al., *Aikokushin, Kokueki to wa nani ka*, Tokyo, Asukomu, 2004.

[19] For example, Kang Sangjung, *Omoni*, Tokyo, Shûeisha, 2010. This is a novel closely based on the life of Kang's mother.

[20] For example, C. Douglas Lummis, Kang Sangjung and Kayano Toshihito, *Kokka to Aidentiti o Tou*, Tokyo, Iwanami Bukkuretto, 2009; Kang Sangjung and Nakajima Takeshi, *Nihon: Konkyōchi kara no Toi*, Tokyo, Mainichi Shimbunsha, 2008.

[21] For a careful discussion of this phenomenon, see *Rumi Sakamoto, 'Koreans, Go Home!' Internet Nationalism in Contemporary Japan as a Digitally Mediated Subculture, The Asia-Pacific Journal Vol 9, Issue 10 No 2, March 7, 2011.*

[22] See for example "Kakuheiki Shōmetsu to Genpatsu Jikō: Kang Kyōjū ni Kiku", *Shinano Mainichi Shimbun*, 7 August 2011.

[23] See, for example, Kang Sangjung, "Minnan ga Tsuzuite iru", *Shinano Mainichi Shimbun*, 17 June 2011.

[24] See Anthony Smith, *Nationalism*, Oxford, Polity Press, 2001.

[25] Immanuel Wallerstein, *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth Century Paradigms*, Temple University Press, 1991, p. 75.

[26] Komatsukawa Incident – A *Zainichi* Korean man named Yi Jin-U (Ri Chin'u) was tried and found guilty of raping and murdering a high-school girl and a young woman in 1958. Yi was a highly intelligent young man, whose letters reflecting on his crime and impending execution evoked

a strong response, and became (amongst other things) the subject of Ōshima Nagisa's film *Kōshikei* [Death by Hanging]

[27] Kim Hiro Incident – In 1968, Kim Hiro, a *Zainichi* Korean from an impoverished background, shot two gangsters and then held eighteen people hostage in a siege at a guest house before surrendering to police, an event that attracted massive nationwide media coverage in Japan.

[28] Mishima Incident – the ritual suicide in 1970 of novelist Mishima Yukio and an associate following a far-fetched attempt to carry out a right-wing military coup d'état.

[29] United Red Army Incident – A siege at Mount Asama in 1972 which resulted in the arrest of five members of the extreme left-wing United Red Army [*Rengō Sekigun*]. It was subsequently revealed that fourteen other members of the group had been killed in internal purges by their comrades.

[30] Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism*, New York, New York University Press, 1997.

[31] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Cleveland and New York, World Publishing Co., 1962, p. 478.

[32] See, for example, Kang Sangjung, *Kang Sangjung no Seijigaku*, Tokyo Shūeisha Shinsho, 2006, ch. 6.