



# Calculated Nationalism in Contemporary South Korea

Movements for  
Political and Economic  
Democratization  
in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

Gil-Soo Han

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Democratization in the 21st Century*

*Gil-Soo Han*

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Cover illustration: The Five Candlelights representing the grassroots' spirits of the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*—Hope, Empathy, Consideration, Embracing, and Solidarity.

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# Table of Contents

Illustrations	9
Preface	11
Acknowledgements	13
1 Introduction	15
2 A Morphogenetic Perspective of Grassroots Nationalism A Case of South Korea	25
3 The Movement to Redress the Japanese Military “Comfort Women” Grassroots’ Concerns and Responses Today	71
4 “No Abe, Yes Japan” Movement in 2019 Bolstering National Pride and Identity	115
5 Taking a Free Ride on the Reunification Train Grassroots’ Cost-Benefit Nationalism	155
6 The 2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution and Grassroots Nationalism An Analysis of Public Speeches at the Rallies	187
7 Nostalgic Nationalists in South Korea The Flag-Carriers’ Struggles	215
8 Standing against Workplace Bullying ( <i>Gapjil</i> ) Case Studies	245
9 Concluding Remarks	277
Epilogue	301
Index	303



“역사를 잊은 민족에게 미래는 없다.”  
단재 신채호 *조선상고사* (1924)

“There is no future for a nation that has forgotten history.”  
Danjae Shin Chae-Ho, *Ancient History of Korea*





# Illustrations

## Figures

Figure 2.1	The Elaboration of Structure, Culture, and Agency with Reference to the Morphogenesis of the <i>2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution</i>	58
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## Tables

Table 6.1	Speakers' Age and Gender Distribution	197
Table 7.1	Flag-Carrying Speakers' Age and Gender Distribution	222
Table 8.1	Why People Bypass the Ministry of Employment and Labour (A Survey by WB-119)	266



# Preface

Korean society has been rapidly transitioning to westernization and modernization ever since the end of the Korean War (1950–1953). Living away from South Korea for the last few decades, I have found it fascinating to observe South Korea moving from strength to strength politically, economically, and culturally. South Korea has gone through many trials and errors in all dimensions in achieving a compressed development. Undoubtedly, not only has ordinary citizens' labour been the most significant yet unrewarded catalyst for that development, but their will to build a nation-state with a better democracy and to achieve economic democratization has been extraordinary by any measure. Such grassroots effort has repeatedly been crushed by authoritarian as well as civilian regimes, which both institutionalized how the underprivileged are kept under control. But the grassroots have never given up. *The April 19 Revolution* in 1960 and the *June Struggle* in 1987 were two grand events in that Korean grassroots decisively spoke out with their words and deeds. They fought for freedom, justice, and fraternity as they desired modernization over westernization. The grassroots experienced economic development at a significant cost: loss of many lives, ill health, uneven distribution of economic well-being, and reduced freedom and human rights.

The 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution* is the third grassroots movement for political and economic democratization. The *Revolution* vividly demonstrated that Korean society was still in the process of achieving further democratization of politics and a fairer distribution of the fruits of economic development. The *Candlelight Revolution* started to oust the corrupt regime of Park Geun-Hye, and, more importantly, it was an eruption of people's frustration about the unfairness and misdeeds of vested interest groups who, after decades, continue to engender elite nationalism and self-serve rather than look for ways to build a welfare nation-state for the majority of Koreans. This book has selected several important topics that matter to the lives of grassroots, captures historic moments, and attempts to make sense of the current socio-historical and cultural context. I was particularly keen to sketch and analyse selected dimensions of Korean society that indicate people's persistent efforts to improve Korean society. This book is an effort to capture the grassroots' outcries to pursue peace, harmony, and human rights within the Korean peninsula and beyond.

## **Romanization**

I have used the revised Romanization for Korean names and words. I have also Romanized the names of some Koreans and media outlets based on their existing Romanization, which makes my Romanization not always consistent. In tandem with Romanization, I have also used the Korean alphabet to help informed readers identify original references and cited information. Korean words and relevant incidents are presented with English translations and vice versa.

## **Korean names**

Korean names are first written in family names, followed by one's given name, e.g., Hong Gil-Dong or Hong Gildong. As many other writers have done, I have followed this pattern without a comma after each surname. In-text references to some Korean names provide initials of given names or given names in full in addition to their surname since Korean family names such as Kim and Lee are common.

This book is predominantly about South Korea; thus, "Korea" refers to South Korea unless specified otherwise.

## **References to the Media Reportages**

Some news outlets, such as *Financial News* or *Yonhap News* are either well known outside Korea or easy to recognize for non-Korean speakers. In these cases, no Korean Romanization is provided at times, with English names only.

All financial values originally found in the Korean material have been converted into American dollar figures, treating one dollar as equivalent to 1000 KRW. This will allow readers to find out easily the original figure in Korean currency at the time of publication of the Korean material. For readers' interest, one American dollar was equivalent to 1218 KRW, and one Australian dollar was equivalent to 911 KRW on April 7, 2022.

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Chapters 6 and 7 are written as stand-alone papers, and some of their contents reiterate the points from Chapter 2. Chapter 7 is based on the published article, “Nostalgic Nationalists in South Korea: The Flag-Carriers’ Struggles” in *Critical Asian Studies* (2021), co-authored with David Hundt. I am grateful to Francis & Taylor for permission to reproduce the article in this book. I am also indebted to David Hundt for his constructive input on Chapter 6.

Many Koreans, in varying capacities, have spared their valuable time to provide me with helpful information. I am grateful to Ahn Ji-Hoon, Ban Seon-Yeong, and Kim Jeong-Won from the National Museum of Japanese Forced Mobilization, Busan (국립 일제강제 동원역사관). I have collected much information and insights about the Japanese military “comfort women” from Han Kyonghee, General Secretary of the Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (정의기억연대), and Yoon Meehyang, former Chair of the Board, now a member of the Korean Assembly. I express my gratitude to Lee Jin-Soon from Wagl (와글), Jeong Tae-Seok from Jeonbuk National University, and Cho Young-Han from Hanguk University of Foreign Studies for sharing their knowledge of and informing me of the grassroots’ passion for democracy in Korea.

Saskia Gieling, Acquisition Editor from the Amsterdam University Press, recognized the proposal’s value. Since her departure, Loretta Lou from the Press sustained her support and interest in the project. Mike Sanders from the Press offered me a great deal of help in preparing the manuscript at a high professional standard, in addition to his meticulous copy editing. Remco Mulckhuysen from Coördesign professionally and thoughtfully designed the cover, which originated from the work of *Hankook Ilbo*. Sarah de Waard, the project manager, provided me with scrupulous support at the final stage of the production. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript. They have greatly helped me to finetune some historical facts that I misunderstood. Yet, I remain solely responsible for what is presented in the manuscript. I thank Doug Porpora from Drexel University for encouraging me at an early stage of the project regarding critical realism and feedback on earlier versions of parts of the manuscript.

This book project has been carried out as part of the Laboratory Programme for Korean Studies through the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and Korean Studies Promotion Service of the Academy of Korean Studies, which consisted of seven formal members and other associate members. The former included Jung Kyungja (The University of Technology Sydney), Moon Seungsook (Vassar College), Chung Erin Aeran (The Johns Hopkins University), Kim Nora Hui-Jung (The University of Mary Washington), Kim Jaeun (The University of Michigan), Lim Timothy (The California State University, Los Angeles). Associate members were Lee Hye-Kyung (Pai Chai University), Seol Dong-Hoon (Jeonbuk National University), Kim Sangjun (Kyunghee University), Brian Yecies (University of Wollongong), Ko Byoung-Chul (Academy of Korean Studies), and Roh Jaekyung (Monash University). I am grateful to these co-researchers as they have shown interest in my work and have taken the journey of writing this book with me in a valuable way. Many personnel from the Academy of Korean Studies have been a great source of support for the project. They include Lee Juhae, Kwak Sumin, Khoo Nanhee, Lee Kang-Han, Kim Jong-Myeong, Kim Rihee, Jeong In-Yeong, Lee Woo-Jeong, Lee Geum-Bong, and Yang Young-Kyun.

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# 1 Introduction

## Abstract

This chapter notes the aims of the book and individual chapters, which analyse the Korean nationalism of contemporary Korea, i.e., Korean grassroots' perception of their nation-state, national identities, and what they desire regarding the future direction of the nation-state. In the politico-historical context of the globe, the fruits of the *1968 Revolution in France* could not reach Korean society under its military regime and exploitative economic structure. This deprivation of the fruits continued to frustrate the grassroots and especially social actors in South Korea. The *2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution* is one of their reactions. This book investigates the minds of the Korean progressives who are concerned about Korea's political and economic democratization.

**Keywords:** Korean nationalism, grassroots nationalism, calculated nationalism, *2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution*, *1968 Revolution in France*, *June Struggle in 1987*

The Korean nation-state has gone through drastic changes politically, economically, and socio-culturally since the end of the Korean War (1950–1953). A few different types of regimes, such as authoritarian, conservative, and progressive governments, have (un)successfully engaged the people of Korea. Indeed, hegemonic groups have turned their given political and economic contexts to their advantage to stimulate and incentivize the Korean people to engage with their leadership and ruling ideologies.<sup>1</sup> At structural and cultural levels, the government bureaucrats and socio-economic elites have actively created and imposed top-down or elitist nationalistic sentiment on the nation's people, often leaning towards ethno-nationalistic sentiment. Grassroots, as opposed to elites, refer to ordinary people regarded as the

<sup>1</sup> cf., Carrigan, Mark. "Being Realist about Social Movements." *The Sociological Imagination*, May 15, 2013, <http://sociologicalimagination.org/archives/12857>, accessed November 2, 2018.



source of the sovereignty of a nation-state, i.e., the Republic of Korea in this book. Although the people at the grassroots level have proactively responded to this propaganda, which the national elites from all sectors have engendered, the grassroots' efforts have generally been undermined, rewarded with little compensation, and not well understood. In fact, the whole nation has been yearning for individual and national prosperity for decades. The nation's prosperity and international image have been the South Korean nation's focal interest. Individual agents were encouraged to "pull their weight" together with their fellow Koreans at the time of building the national economy from the 1960s to the 1980s. The majority of the people cooperated with these regimes. However, it seemed that the elites had appropriated all the resources available to them to take advantage of the grassroots, which has caused much friction within the nation-state, rather than making an effort to create a harmonious society in which there are mutual respect, free-flow communication, and co-prosperity (cf., Baker 2010).

As I wish to analyse the events and issues under examination in this book, it is essential to have some socio-historical background of contemporary Korean society. Following the Independence from Japanese imperialism, both North and South Korea were left with the task of rebuilding their national politics and economy. However, based on the neighbouring superpowers, North Korea was under the care of the Soviet Union and South Korea under the United States' army military government. Japanese collaborators were the politically and economically dominant group during and after the Independence. The American army military government called back those Japanese collaborators with cultural and economic capital to the significant roles in the government and financial planning offices. Those activists who were often ideologically progressive and fought against the Japanese collaborators were persecuted and could not find substantial roles in the rebuilding of South Korea. They and many dissident voices were again either marginalized or prosecuted based on their left-wing ideological commitment in the era of the Cold War. The Japanese collaborators and the Christians who fled North Korea formed politically conservative groups and have had a lasting influence on South Korean society, the legacy of which is continuing even today. As will be discussed later, the conservative political party has been standpattist rather than conservative from the viewpoints of Western democracies. For the moment, I note that in contemporary South Korea, the labels "progressive" and "conservative" have developed particular connotations, and do not align with the traditional "left/right" divisions in liberal democracies. This is in large part due to the halting development of the two-party system in the context of the Cold War, which

worked against the emergence of centre-left parties that could advocate for the rights of workers. Korean progressives are thus comparable to their centre-left counterparts elsewhere in the liberal-democratic world, but are relatively conservative. Korean conservatives, meanwhile, are comparable to the most rigid form of conservatism in the democratic world. In this book, I follow the common public usage by Koreans.

Prior to those times, Koreans were frustrated with Rhee Syngman's corrupt government and cried out for democracy during the *April 19 Revolution* in 1960. However, following Park Chung-Hee's *coup d'état*, the political rights of the people were under heavy control until his assassination on October 26, 1979. However, social and student movements against the authoritarian regimes continued, which culminated in the *June Struggle* in 1987, leading to the dramatic announcement of the presidential election by people's direct vote, which was expected to end the military regimes that had a habit of changing the constitution as they wished. Industrial workers who had contributed to the national development had not felt they have been rewarded enough with their share. Unequal economic distribution and the deprivation of political rights from ordinary people have been key concerns of the continuing social movements.

One of the most significant social movements in contemporary South Korea is the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*. This protest was an eruption of the grassroots' decades-long frustrations, involving 32 per cent of the national population (Sonn 2017b: 84), asking "Is this a proper nation-state (이게 나라냐)?" It was a grassroots' question of what their president should *not* be like and what they wanted out of the leader. From the viewpoint of the grassroots, President Park Geun-Hye was not suitable to continue to lead the nation-state and the grassroots ousted her. However, the impeachment of President Park was only a partial feature of what the *Candlelight Revolution* was about and what the grassroots questioned. As argued by social scientists in South Korea (Kim 2017, 2019, 2021; Jung 2017; Kim 2016; Sonn 2017a), the *Candlelight Revolution* aimed to reignite and continue what was incomplete by the grassroots' past attempts to bring about political and economic democratization to South Korea, such as the *April 19 Revolution* in 1960 and the *June Struggle* in 1987. The representing features of these major movements are slightly different from each other. However, the common feature is to overcome the elites' and vested interest groups' lingering engagement in monopolizing power and status to serve their own benefits. The movements were against the elites' exploiting the grassroots that they are supposed to serve, which adversely affected the nation's political and economic democratization.

South Korea has achieved significant developments in democracy and economic prosperity especially since hosting the Seoul Olympics in 1988, which was a turning point to deliver the fruits of decades of hard work. It is often noted that South Korea is the only country in the world that has achieved both democracy and high economic prosperity since the Second World War (cf., Lee Y 2018; Kim E 2015). However, this view does not fully reflect Korean society, where bribes and corruption involving public office bearers and the mistreatment of employees or juniors are common across many sectors of Korean society. This has been typified by the corruption scandals and bribes of most recent Korean presidents and their families. Korean people's distaste for unequal treatment has been publicly expressed and the media representations clearly indicate the trend of corruption and public distaste against it. *Democracy Index 2017* labelled South Korea a "flawed democracy."<sup>2</sup> There are ongoing reports of the "haves" bullying the "have-nots" at workplaces and department stores. These are considered some of the transitional features of Korean democratic development and economic prosperity. However, the grassroots have become impatient with the slow changes and their frustrations are manifested through the mass rallies.

New features of grassroots or civil movements have been observed in the prosperous nation of South Korea for the last three decades. While there is a clear recognition of the new features of civil or nationalist movements at the grassroots level, it has not been known as to what motivates them to engage in such movements and how. The key aim of the book is to investigate the features of structural and cultural changes in Korean society and to examine the grassroots agents' efforts to reclaim their socio-cultural and political rights with reference to several influential events. The 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution* initiated this book project and the related aims of the book are as follows: What brought the Koreans together to hold the 2016–2017 *Candlelight* protests? What has brought it to success? What were the influential and stimulating social structural and cultural contexts that enabled the grassroots movement to be successful? And how have the agents gone through from primary agents to social actors, acting as agents for change? The book applies these questions to the following chapter topics: the Japanese military "comfort women," "No Abe, No Japan" movement, grassroots aspiration to reunification, national flag-carriers' counter-movement against the

2 *The Economist, Democracy Index 2017*, [http://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/Democracy\\_Index\\_2017.pdf](http://pages.eiu.com/rs/753-RIQ-438/images/Democracy_Index_2017.pdf), accessed November 8, 2018. Other measures are: "full democracy," "hybrid regime," and "authoritarian." The rating has recently improved, which I mention in the last chapter of the book.

candlelight protests, and grassroots' responses to *gapjil* (workplace bullying). The summaries of the subsequent chapters are as follows.

Chapter 2 provides the broader theoretical perspectives that I have deployed for the analysis of data on the selected empirical topics. Starting with the chosen definition of nationalism, which is a form of social movement, I elaborate on grassroots nationalism and calculated nationalism. Then I introduce Margaret Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach which closely examines the related structural and cultural contexts, which go through a continuing transformation based on the individual agents' properties actively engaging with the structure and culture for a change. At the end of Chapter 2, I provide the value of analysing news reports as the main source of data for this project.

Chapter 3 is an analysis of grassroots' concerns about the Japanese military "comfort women," who were forcibly recruited to the Japanese military "comfort stations" during the Second World War. Gyeongsang-Namdo Province had the greatest number of victims of this type of forced labour and human rights abuse. Citizens of Tongyeong and Geoje cities from the Gyeongsang-Namdo Province developed a website to support the victims from the communities. The website represents the citizens' nationalism and national identities with reference to the crimes committed by imperial Japan and the community's efforts to have the matter resolved.

Park Geun-Hye's hasty and inadequate agreement to settle the Japanese military "comfort women" issue with the Japanese government led by Abe Shinzo in December 2015 turned out to be devastating to the victims and the majority of the socially and historically conscious South Koreans. Following Park's impeachment and the election of Moon Jae-In, the Korean government faced a few ongoing related legal cases and attempted to redress the matter, which then angered Japan's Prime Minister Abe who appeared to look down upon the Korean nation-state. Abe instigated a trade provocation, creating obstacles for some Japanese corporations exporting a few key products to Korean electronics companies. As a response to this trade provocation, Koreans initiated a large-scale boycott against Japan—the "No Abe, No Japan" movement. This boycott is analysed in Chapter 4.

The impact of the divided Korean peninsula has been destructive, and the cost has been astronomical to both South and North Korea. Most South Koreans used to dream of reunified Korea without reservation until the 1980s, singing, "Our Wish is Reunification (우리의 소원은 통일)." A good portion of South Koreans had family and relatives living in the North and ethno-nationalism was a prevalent form of nationalism, through which South Koreans perceived North Koreans and the Northern regime. However,

the 21st century South Korean wish for reunification is quite different, and Chapter 5 analyses the grassroots' nationalism based on cost-benefit towards reunification.

Chapter 6 analyses the speeches by people from all walks of life at the rallies of the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*. The grassroots speakers, as a group of progressive social actors, expressed their past, present, and future concerns about the Korean nation-state. But it is not only about the future of the nation-state per se, it is also about their experienced individual life opportunities and concerns expressed as calculated nationalism.

Chapter 7 is odd in this book in the sense that its data is produced by the conservative flag-carriers who led the counter-movement to the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*. This chapter aims to include the voices of conservative grassroots. My analysis of the data commenced with the assumption that the flag-carriers make a genuinely patriotic group in their own right. Nonetheless, I may not be completely free from my own theoretical bias in this analysis.

Unfair treatment of workers at nearly all workplaces has been a prevalent concern in Korean society for decades and represents the unequal human relationship deeply embedded in the structural and cultural properties of Korean society, especially in the neoliberal economic context, which is discussed in Chapter 8. Under the emergent structural and cultural properties, individual agents of Korean society realize that their perception and capacity of the Korean nation-state have changed and should be reflected in their workplace accordingly. So are they engaging in social movements for better and fairer treatment of workers.

Each chapter is accompanied by a brief literature review on the relevant topic. The findings in each chapter are organized around structural, cultural, and people's emergent properties based on the strength and explanatory power of Margaret Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach to social phenomena. Those properties are analytically different concepts and processes; however, much of them occur simultaneously in reality, and it is difficult to separate them from each other. Although structure, culture, and agency are closely intertwined, analytical dualism is an integral part of the approach adopted in this book. I will further discuss these concepts in Chapter 2.

Why is this book written? According to Robinson (2007: 7), "While South Korea has democratized in terms of procedural democracy and individual rights, its political system remains captive to elitist and highly personalized political parties. How the system will evolve to include the voice of all major interest groups in society is still a work in progress." Robinson aptly points to the status of politics more than ten years ago, and his view still

applies to the present to a significant degree. Robinson (2007: 7) goes on to argue that “[w]hat happens on the Korean peninsula in the next decade will have a decisive effect on how the entire region will realign itself to the realities of the twenty-first century.” I note that the *Candlelight Revolution* precisely represents Robinson’s “what happens,” which encompasses Park’s impeachment, Pyeongchang Winter Olympics 2018, and the *Candlelight* rallies that lasted for six months in 2016–2017. In addition, grassroots’ expectations of their workplaces and the nation-state are changing and expressed in many social movements. Some examples of their expectations and how they have been unfolding in terms of their positive progress have been analysed in this book.

This book revisits and analyses contemporary Korean nationalism, much of which has been answered through the media and academic writing. This book deals with the Korean nationalism of contemporary Korea, i.e., Korean grassroots’ perception of their nation-state, national identities, and what they desire regarding the future direction of the nation-state. Naturally, there are numerous perspectives. This is one of them, analysing moments of the present time, but also making sense of the moments in the broader historical context.

What does this book do? The primary task is to represent what is in the minds of a good proportion of progressive contemporary grassroots Koreans, e.g., the advocates of candlelight holders for political and economic democratization, and in the case of Chapter 7, the conservative national flag-carriers. Of course, this is my interpretation of their perception of their nation-state and national identities, including what is in their minds based on my sociological analysis. It is not my intention to generalize my findings to the predominant proportion of contemporary Koreans. In this respect, I pay particular focus to a descriptive analysis of the data set under analysis, attempting to best represent the minds of the politically progressive grassroots.

Following the Independence from Japanese imperialism in 1945, Korean society, economy, and culture have gone through tumultuous changes. As noted, three politically remarkable events that changed Korean society are the *April 19 Revolution* in 1960, the *June Struggle* in 1987, and the *2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution*. Following the first two events, Korean society continued with notable democratic and economic development. However, the dominant elites’ oppression of the people they were supposed to serve was apparent. Thus, in the politico-historical context of the globe, the fruits of the *1968 Revolution in France* could not reach the Korean society under its military regime and exploitative economic structure. This continued

to frustrate the grassroots and especially social actors in South Korea, which then eventually brought about the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*. The efforts to engender changes are continuing and will continue for decades. This is a significant transitional period in its own right. As such, it is important to understand what is in the minds of the Korean grassroots in terms of democracy, the socio-economic dimensions of the quality of life, perceptions of North Korea and the division of the peninsula, and the long-lasting impact of Japanese imperialism. I examine these topics with reference to the *intransitive* dimensions of structure and culture, most features of which are more resistant to change than others. That is, what kinds of social structure and culture have pre-existed and had a lingering effect on the formation of the Korean society and also what the dominant and emergent structural and cultural properties are like. This provides a *transitive* knowledge of snapshots of contemporary South Korea. Also, importantly, it considers how the component members of the Korean society, as the fundamental agents of change, have been taking their own roles so that they go through transformations of their social consciousness and eventually come to transform the context in which they live their life, i.e., double morphogenesis.

What do I mean by nationalism in this book? I follow a broad definition of nationalism, based on Stacey's (2018: 8) definition, largely referring to an individual's sense of belonging and their individual perception of their own nation-state, associated with commitment, patriotic feelings, and solidarity. Further, as Goodman (2017) regards nationalism as a type of social movement, I devote myself to investigating how the grassroots are committed to selected dimensions of social and national affairs and what South Korean national identities and characteristics, they think, ought to move towards. The concept of grassroots nationalism and its practice are not new. The concept shares much in common with personal nationalism, banal nationalism, and embedded nationalism (Cohen 1996; Antonsich 2016; Billig 1995; Hearn 2007). However, these concepts have rarely been explored empirically in the non-Western context despite increasing recognition of the significance of bottom-up nationalism. South Korea, as a relatively new advanced country, makes a worthwhile case to examine for the reasons mentioned above.

In my analysis of these major events, I am deploying the concepts of grassroots nationalism and calculated nationalism. Instead of top-down, elite-led, or state-imposed nationalism, it has been a grassroots' effort to change the undemocratic practices of politics and the economy of the nation. Grassroots nationalism is not unique to South Korea; however, it is

practiced differently in different politico-economic contexts. Calculated nationalism is a form of nationalism that the component members of a modern nation-state commonly put into practice in their political and economic participation in everyday life. It is a nationalism that caters to the needs of individuals as well as what is required as a way of sustaining a nation-state. Individual life trajectories in each nation-state help the individuals to achieve and enjoy the benefit of calculated nationalism. These terms will be discussed in more detail later.

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## 2 A Morphogenetic Perspective of Grassroots Nationalism

A Case of South Korea

### Abstract

Chapter 2 provides the broader theoretical perspectives that I have deployed for the analysis of data on the selected empirical topics. Starting with the chosen definition of nationalism, which is a form of social movement, I elaborate on grassroots nationalism and calculated nationalism. Then I introduce Margaret Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach which closely examines related structural and cultural contexts, which go through a continuing transformation based on individual agents' properties actively engaging with structure and culture for change. At the end of Chapter 2, I demonstrate the value of analysing news reports as the main source of data for this project.

**Keywords:** grassroots nationalism, calculated nationalism, morphogenesis, morphostasis, critical realism, analytical dualism

This chapter aims firstly to review several different kinds of nationalism to provide an overview of the theoretical views around nationalism. I will move on to discuss why the study of nationalism and national identities requires an adequate understanding of personhood, the formation of which is in a dialectical relationship between agency and structure. I also consider nationalism to be in constant flux rather than to be static. Thus different kinds of nationalism are constantly produced, reproduced, and consumed as part of the process of social change. Therefore, I regard nationalism as a social movement (Goodman 2017), which implies that a national movement accompanies nationalism. I will devote much space to how individual agents actively engage in the social movements and how their personhood changes from primary agents, corporate agents, and then to voluntary social actors,

becoming and acting as agents for change—i.e., the process of engaging in the grassroots movement.

## Nationalism

What are the key elements which comprise nationalism? “The preservation of the cultures, customs, governance, and identity” has been crucial in classical definitions of nationalism since the components are considered essential for the establishment and maintenance of a sovereign state (Stacey 2018: 8). Nationalism refers to a sense of “belonging to a common nation, which is defined by citizenship in the same nation-state; most often associated with feelings of loyalty and patriotism toward the states and fostering solidarity among citizens” (Stacey 2018: 8). The populist notion of nationalism is for one to claim her country’s superiority over other nations, whereas patriotism refers to being committed to one’s country. These popular notions do not align with Stacey’s definition of nationalism, which notes there is a clear overlap between nationalism and patriotism. Nationalism is inclusive of patriotism, not vice versa. Also, within this book, I consider nationalism as an ideology that is in pursuit of a nation’s “independence, self-reliance, integration and glory” (Kim 2016: 230). Stacey acknowledges nationalism as an ideology as well as an affective sense of belonging to a sovereign nation (p. 8). Stacey also stretches the definition of nationalism to be “a network of attitudes, norms, and actions that provide the necessary political, social (including moral), and cultural value to a nation or national identity, while simultaneously providing obligations for members of the nation in order to maintain and develop” nationalism (Stacey 2018: 8). The members of a nation all tend to have an affective sense of belonging to their nation, but the types of nationalism to which the members attach themselves will vary. When a proportion of the members of a nation feel the nation’s socio-political, cultural, and national identity is breached, they may form a protest group, which can lead to a social and/or national movement.

The strands of *what nationalism is about* are based on an emphasis on a particular dimension of a nation. Ethno-nationalism was once a commonly accepted form, just as a nation was understood as “a self-conscious ethnic group” (Connor 1973: 3). Classical nationalism typically does not support globalism or multiculturalism. Such classical nationalism is closely associated with the Alt-Right and the rise of Donald Trump and with commercial nationalism, which supports nation branding to revamp national identities (Stacey 2018: 9; Volčič and Andrejević 2016). Ethno-nationalism determines

the national identity based on ethnicity and one's "adopted national identity is superior to all others" (Stacey 2018: 11). Other factors that take critical roles in ethno-nationalism are shared heritage and common language (p. 11) and the members of a nation are much like part of an extended family (Muller 2008: 20), e.g., pure-blood nationalism (Han 2016b).

The non-territorial nature of the internet and a large scale of migration have made it "difficult to uphold a collective sense of national identity on shared images, representations, myths" (Eriksen 2007: 1). South Korea has rapidly become a multicultural nation and ethno-nationalism in Korea is increasingly losing its grip. Kang Won-Taek finds that the younger generations in South Korea see their own identity based on the nation-state of South Korea relatively more than the blood-shared Koreans which tend to encompass Koreans in the North and the South as well as the Koreans living outside the peninsula (Kang 2006). South Korea is at, or has just walked across, its crossroads as to what the future direction of its nationalism ought to be. The nation is currently and broadly divided between the progressive and conservative parties although the division is far from clear-cut. The tension between these two different parties is an ongoing and complex dimension of the nationalist movements in South Korea ever since the time of Japanese colonialism (1919–1945).

James Goodman (2017) rightly sees nationalism as a specific type of social movement of capitalist modernity. Similar to a critical realist discussion of social change and movement, to be discussed later, Goodman contends that an analysis of nationalism ought to focus on its "cultural and structural origins and development" concerning their "political-contextual dynamics" (p. 18). Goodman (2017: 7) suggests five broad approaches to understanding nationalist movements: "ethno-national, modernization, state-centred, class centred, and uneven development variants." Goodman's five approaches are based on his historical sketch of the ways in which nationalism has emerged, and been reproduced and consumed in many parts of the world, with reference to some key theoreticians of nationalism. Here, I intend to *partially* re-interpret Goodman's approaches and note their applicability to the study of nationalism in South Korea (hereafter Korea unless specified). My goal is to provide a broad sketch of the Korean nation-state's development with reference to Goodman's five general theories of nationalism before I review a few different approaches to studying grassroots nationalism, such as banal-, everyday-, and embedded nationalism.

In the first approach, ethnic identity is a crucial factor in the development of nationalist movements, in which nationalism refers to "identity or loyalty to the ethnic group, more a cultural identification than a political ideology"

(Goodman 2017: 7; Connor 1994; Smith 1998). Ethnic nationalism has been a source for the elites to exploit, as well as a goal for the masses to aspire to in the postcolonial and divided Korean peninsula (An 2018; Shin 2006). Since the massive increase in the number of newly settled Koreans who were born outside of Korea, there has been a majority movement towards “nouveau-riche nationalism” to advocate ethnic nationalism (Han 2016b). However, pure-blood nationalism has become rapidly outdated and there is increasingly a call for “open nationalism” (Kim 2009).

Second, the coming of the modern industrial society has been possible through the reformation or discarding of traditional thoughts and deeds that were prevalent in pre-modern society (Goodman 2017: 7; Gellner 1987). As the Korean nation-state has strived to achieve modernization and development, which was perceived as a necessity for the sake of prosperity of the nation and its individual members, workers have increasingly adopted new and modified values, rather than rigidly adhering to older values, e.g., filial piety, a seniority-based promotion at work (Han 2016a, 2019). However, tensions between the old and new values continue, in the context of the existence of widely contrasting forms of nationalist movements which underpin diverse and different goals, e.g., modernization, old and new values.

Third, Goodman (2017: 7, cited from Breuilly 1982) defines nationalism “as a political ideology carried by nationalist movements that emerge to challenge monarchical claims to unhindered realm over territory and people.” However, as Goodman (2017) notes, state-centred policies and nationalism have worked in close cooperation with private capitalist interests, especially of the conglomerates. In the absence of a monarchy, Korean society has still faced an “active” modernization. Democratic movements in the last few decades have been a nationalist movement to remedy this close link between the government and the private sector/capitalist interests, and the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution* is one example of them.<sup>1</sup>

Fourth, some writers such as Eric Hobsbawm and Jim Blaut have used Marxist theory to see “nationalism and nationalist movements as expressions of class conflict” (Goodman 2017: 8). In line with Hobsbawm’s view of nationalism as an ideological apparatus of the ruling classes, the state elites’ promotion of the national interest is largely geared towards reproducing and maintaining dominant capitalist relations (Hobsbawm 2012). Similar to

1 The phenomenon of the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution* was the scholarly stimulus for the whole project and this chapter gives some prominence to the phenomenon. However, the morphogenetic approach to nationalism as a social movement applies to other empirical topics discussed in the chapters.

what has just been discussed, the state elites in Korea have worked closely in the interest of dominant capitalist groups, even to the level of collusion.<sup>2</sup> A possible consequence is that the capitalist classes have often bullied and exploited their employees, e.g., the Korean Air nut rage scandal in 2018.<sup>3</sup> In the case of Korean Air, it carries the nation-state's title but has little to do with its people's interests. Ordinary people's standing against its vice president's bullying behaviour became a national movement at the grassroots level, which engendered a type of nationalism, e.g., ordinary people's massive responses to *gapjil* (workplace bullying). The movement was an expression of grassroots as to what they think the relationships ought to be like between the employer and the employee, the senior and the junior, the manager and the worker, in the Korean nation-state.

The fifth view notes that the "historical unfolding of global uneven development is the determining variable of national movements" (Goodman 2017: 8). The capitalist world system is such that there are spatially unequal capitalist relations of production and consumption between the countries of the core, periphery, and semi-periphery (Wallerstein 2004). These spatially unequal relations are also reflected in the forms of inequalities in each of these countries, which maintain capitalist stability (Goodman 2017: 8; Amin 1980). Even in the era of globalization, South Korea as an industrial nation takes the spaces of both the core and semi-periphery, which raises the question of how to protect its national interests. That is, Korea inflicts exploitation against another country on the one hand, but also is exploited by the core countries on the other hand. Wallerstein's thesis on the world system explains much about unequal economic relations among the core, periphery, and semi-periphery. However, along the line of Wallerstein's structural approach, it is intriguing to note Tom Nairn's argument that the real origins of nationalism "are not in the folk, not in the individual's repressed passion for some sort of wholeness or identity, but in the machinery of world political economy" (Nairn 1977: 337). Nairn's argument completely ignores the people's agency, and I am particularly interested in exploring the people's agency, while incorporating the political economy. I

2 In 2019, the ruling Democratic Party's effort to reform the Prosecution Office faced strong opposition with the collusion between the major opposition/conservative party, Prosecution and the Press. As of early April 2022, the Democratic Party is still looking into reforming the Prosecution and Press prior to the coming of the Yoon Suk-Yeol's Conservative regime on May 10, 2022.

3 Discussed in Chapter 8, this air rage incident occurred at John F. Kennedy International Airport, when the Korean Air vice president was dissatisfied with the way a flight attendant served her macadamia nuts.

argue that with notable economic development in the last several decades, Korean democracy has also made remarkable improvements, coupled with individual citizens' autonomy by all means.

I have so far noted that there are social movements within all societies, and every social movement accompanies one or more types of nationalism. As I am intending to investigate Korean people's nationalism, what are the general theories that I can consider and deploy? First of all, banal nationalism is particularly concerned with the taken-for-granted national symbols such as national flag, national anthem, patriotic associations, which are "reproduced and represented through everyday life and popular culture" such as sport, travel, mass media, food, weather reporting and at home (Knott 2015: 1–2; Edensor 2002; Billig 1995; Ichijo and Ranta 2016). The nation-state may be embedded in people's "trivial" or "banal" acts (Storm 2018: 117). However, the scholars of banal nationalism, despite their recognition of the engagement of ordinary people more than the elites, tend to underestimate the "human agency" of the ordinary people (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008: 537; Knott 2015: 2).

Jonathan Hearn (2007: 661) raises a question potentially relevant to the present research as follows. For example, in the annual Edinburgh Festival, Bank of Scotland "as an institution has helped to affirm a taken-for-granted Scottishness" and the Governor of the bank "took the 'salute' of the massed military pipe bands at the final Tattoo of the summer of 1995" (p. 661). The question here is whether the Bank of Scotland provides its staff with "a banal context for reinforcing belief in a Scottish identity" or "Scottish identity provides a resource for reinforcing staff commitment to the bank" (p. 662). I find that both arguments are equally plausible. However, I contend that Scottish identity or Scottishness is prevalent and pre-exists within and outside the bank prior to any banal context within the bank, which is in line with Hearn's conclusion (pp. 662–663). With reference to the present study, Korean people's Koreanness and grassroots national identities are not only autonomous on one hand, but also construed in the given structure and culture of the society. This process is about the creation as well as reproduction and sustaining nationalism.

Everyday nationalism acknowledges and maintains the significance of "everyday life" as a crucial part of the inquiry. Knott (2015: 1) finds that the uniqueness of everyday nationalism is to affirm Hobsbawm's (2012: 10) point that nationalism is not only "constructed essentially from above" and "which cannot be understood unless also analysed from below," conceived by Hobsbawm as the "assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests or ordinary people." I contend that Hobsbawm's definition of nationalism is in

close affinity with the critical realist analysis of the structure and agency in fully understanding a social phenomenon (Archer 1989, 1995). The need to combine both top-down and bottom-up nationalism without conflation in either direction is recognized by other scholars as well (Brubaker et al. 2006). The everyday perspective may not be as dramatic or sensational enough as elite nationalist perspectives or movements to attract the interest of the masses. Yet, it could have developed over a long period and be situated deeply in the minds of the ordinary people, thus enduring and highly influential. Anthony Cohen (1994) is one of the scholars who add prominence to the agents' voices to nationalism in a nation-state. I contend and agree with Cohen that in a nation-state, nationalism can be persuasive and can be truly meaningful if it can reflect and "refract their personal and local experience" (Cohen 1996: 810).

Cohen's attempt to recognize the "bottom-up" dimension is commendable and shares Billig's intention to include the voice of "different factions, whether classes, religions, regions, genders or ethnicities" as "the voice of the national whole" (Billig 1995: 71). However, the extent to which his kind of bottom-up nationalism, i.e., personal nationalism, is sociologically sound demands a view. Also, how it operates in reality and whether it can fully and diligently reflect the grassroots perspectives remains unclear (p. 595). In fact, this argument equally applies to banal nationalism, everyday nationalism, and personal nationalism. A critique against these bottom-up approaches is that they *can be* decontextualized and therefore apolitical (Hearn and Antonsich 2018: 595). While I accept that there is a chance that the everyday approaches (e.g., everyday nationalism, personal nationalism) could lack structural and cultural dimensions, I also see a danger of possibly underestimating the agency of the "ordinary" people. Hearn and Antonsich (p. 595) suggest that embracing the plural perspectives from "bottom-up" will address this possible shortfall. Nonetheless, Hearn and Antonsich (2018) who are not convinced about Edensor's (2002) thesis of "everyday nationalism" are cautious about the possibility of ending up reproducing "an image of nation which is blind to the ethnic, racial and religious diversity which populate it" (Hearn and Antonsich 2018: 600, also see Antonsich 2016). Not all the individual agents may be aware of structural and cultural factors, in which their meaning-making activities take place. I contend that if we are willing to take on board the plural perspective from the bottom-up, some of the perspectives are bound to reflect the structure and culture of the society. This is because the agents cannot exist in a structural and cultural vacuum.

The assumption here is that there ought to be inherent relationships between the social structure/culture and the individual agents. How we



analyse the kind of nationalism that takes structure and culture into consideration remains a question. However, nationalism as social action or social movement is an emergent property out of an organized group of people with a set of goals, thus it cannot be dissected to micro levels of analysis (Hearn and Antonsich 2018: 597). The property is more than the sum of “the parts of micro details.” Thus, one of my aims will be to investigate “how people connect to nationalism” (p. 597), and what the agents make out of the given structure and agency with reference to national affairs of politics and economy within the given sovereign nation-state, South Korea. This is an effort to uncover “how individual selves get ‘sutured’ (Hall 1996: 5–6) into taxonomies of identities and how strange, subtle and quixotic this process can be” (Hearn and Antonsich 2018: 599). Recent research along this line is Kaufmann (2017: 21), arguing for complexity as it incorporates everyday nationalism, personal nationalism, contested nationalism, multivocality, and local nationalism as follows:

Against a classic view which sees national consciousness diffused from elites down to masses and from centre out to peripheries, complexity allows for the emergence of national identity from below. States and elites are important actors but the role of mass publics in the everyday production and consumption of nations is vital (p. 21).

Kaufmann (2017: 22) particularly notes why it is worth paying attention to bottom-up approaches in the era of ubiquitous media:

[Emergence] explains why national movements may arise from the “bottom-up” interactions of private associations, leisure providers and the media rather than the deliberate efforts of state elites. National identity, except in the most centralised and authoritarian states, is distributed within individuals in a population such that the collective representation of the nation cannot be read off official documents or a single individual (p. 22).

I reiterate that a fuller understanding of nationalism ought to cover the features of nationalism constructed from above as well as from below because elite nationalism and everyday nationalism in a nation-state are dialectically intertwined. Richard Jenkins (2004: 15–26) aptly argues that a crude reification of a distinction between the self and society, agency and structure, or internal and external realities is to be avoided. According to Hearn (2007: 650), Jenkins is not convinced about the perspective that

privileges “the self” (see Cohen 1994; Craib 1998). I argue that bottom-up nationalism has not been given enough attention in general, especially in fast-changing countries such as South Korea with a remarkable achievement of democracy and economy, and it deserves fuller exploration. Indeed, what is emerging from below matters to me more than, or as important as, “top-down orchestration by elites” (Kaufmann 2017: 21).

It goes without saying that an analysis of nationalism “from below” is essential especially in the context of democracy (Cohen 1996). Individual agents’ lower-level interactions, commitment, and emotional attachments to their nation-state are essential for its sustainability (Kaufmann 2017: 9). However, what is the extent to which nationalism is “constructed essentially from below” in the era in which the people of a nation are fairly well informed of, and have much to say towards, national affairs? Today, South Koreans have over 99.9 per cent literacy, 98 per cent hold a secondary diploma, and 70 per cent hold a post-secondary diploma.<sup>4</sup> I argue that it is increasingly untenable to imagine that the formation of nationalism is little influenced by, or has little to do with, the people at the grassroots level especially when media are ubiquitous and the people are educated and well-informed. This is not to completely downplay the significance of “top-down” perspectives on nationalism. In fact, the top elites and bureaucrats continue to engender a type of nationalism and operationalize it. The state, encompassing the top elites, “is logically opposed to individual agency” (Herzfeld 1992: 21), as the bottom-up perspectives are in the way of the state’s control of the masses. For example, suppressing grassroots and imposing elitist nationalism were common for the Korean military dictators in their effort to industrialize the nation and also for a civilian regime to help the nation overcome the Asian economic crisis in 1997.<sup>5</sup> However, top-down nationalism might have been intended for particular purposes, but may be understood and perceived differently and/or indifferently by the grassroots (cf., Brubaker et al. 2006).<sup>6</sup> This discrepancy between the elites and the grassroots in terms of nationalism and national identity is unlikely to help us understand the real picture of nationalism and the national identity of a nation (Knott 2015: 2). And

4 “Education in South Korea.” *World Education News + Reviews*, October 16, 2018, <https://wenr.wes.org/2018/10/education-in-south-korea>, accessed March 3, 2022. I acknowledge the importance of meaningful literacy.

5 See the section later in this chapter on brief vicissitudes of nationalism in Korea for the last several decades.

6 Brubaker et al. (2006) note that ordinary Hungarians and Romanians in Cluj remained mostly indifferent to their mayor’s nationalist sentiment and also nationalist ideas suggested by political and cultural elites in Hungary.

there are times when the elites are more easily able to engender top-down nationalism for reasons against the interests of the nation and its people (Kim 2016: 233), and at other times, this may be more difficult. Similarly, “bottom-up” nationalism may easily find its way into public discourses at times, and it may be more difficult to do so at other times. An example of the latter is the military and dictatorial period in Korea from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. It is not as though there is nothing in common between “top-down” nationalism and “bottom-up” nationalism. Indeed, there may be a degree of overlap, yet they are different.

Knott (2015: 2) points out that, in the study of nationalism, how nationalism and national identity are experienced and desired by the grassroots continue to be under-researched with some exceptions (Condor 2010; De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak 1999; McCrone and Bechhofer 2015). This is particularly so in the context of Asian society, which is what the book intends to investigate. The political and economic context of Korean society in recent years in particular has brought about the impetus to understand bottom-up nationalism. This is natural as the grassroots hope for changes for the better in terms of their working conditions, life chances, democracy, reunification, human rights, etc.

What should be the objects of analysing everyday nationalism? Knott (2015: 5) observes that scholars of nationalism and national identity typically focus on analysing “categories of analysis” formulated from above rather than “categories of practice,” experienced from below, i.e., by the ordinary people in everyday life (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). This is an attempt to recognize the individual agents’ autonomy in terms of their active partaking in the process of social movements as well as this impact on bringing about changes to society. Skey (2011) suggests that five different areas be measured as experienced by people’s everyday practices and experiences of nationhood and national identity: spatial, temporal, cultural, political and self/other (cited in Knott 2015: 5). However, it is important to bear in mind that Skey’s suggestions can be interpreted and applied differently, depending upon the socio-historical contexts under examination. Applying these ideas to the case of South Korea without reinventing the core ideas developed by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and especially Skey (2011), I will be paying attention to the following dimensions: (1) Korean grassroots’ views of how the nation and national identity are manifested and experienced within or around the demarcated territory; (2) The grassroots’ views of the uniquely distinct features of Korean identity that are more important than other features; (3) Key values and ideas that form Korean cultures and how these are implemented or breached; (4) People’s expectations, frustrations,

and satisfactions about the politics of the nation. My intention here is not to follow the suggestions slavishly, but to study the experiences of the grassroots regarding some selected events which make up the empirical chapters of the book.

There are four broad modalities to observe everyday nationalism, suggested by Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008): “talking, choosing, performing and consuming” (cited in Knott 2015: 6). I find three of them particularly relevant to Korean nationalism and identity under examination in this work. First, “talking” (pp. 539–540) refers to individuals’ perception of the nation, i.e., what the nation means to them, what the nation is expected in its governing the people, and how the nation should be in support of diverse people with their needs at different times. Second, “performing” (pp. 545–546) is concerned with how the nation can facilitate the individuals’ making meaningful life in their everyday life, bearing in mind the human agency of the individual agents (p. 546). Third, as consumers of nationalism, people express their assessment, reception, and preferences towards “national products and projects” (p. 549), such as major national policies for reformation.<sup>7</sup>

Returning to Knott (2015: 6–7), I noticed some of her criticisms of everyday nationalism. First, the category of “ordinary people” is too broad and ignores the existence of the different statuses and classes within a society (cited from Smith 2010: 84). I argue that the middle and lower class may or may not be put together as “one voice” standing for a social movement, depending upon what the foci of the social movement and the consequent analysis are. However, the “more” national and significant the issue at stake, the broader range of people can be included in the category of “ordinary people.” Second, everyday nationalism is primarily dealing with “the contemporary aspects of nationalism, while neglecting, if not rejecting, the ‘causal-historical methodology’ of previous nationalism scholarship” (Smith 2008: 567, cited in Knott 2015: 7). I contend that this criticism is unwarranted and rather ignores a reason that everyday nationalism has come about with the specific need to incorporate individual agents as influential actors in the making of history. This suggests that everyday nationalism is *not* ahistorical. Moreover, even if a researcher examines a social phenomenon at a particular historical point, she ought to consider the topic in a longer span of time and this will make the study historical rather than ahistorical (Mills 1959). Third, everyday nationalism centring on a primary focus can downplay the pre-existing institutional and policy contexts which can both enable as well as restrain

7 These three elements make crucial components of calculated nationalism to be discussed later.

the agents' opportunities for taking action (Knott 2015: 7). This potential danger of decontextualizing the study phenomenon is not a problem of everyday nationalism per se in any case, but this has more to do with whether a researcher is willing to contextualize fully the study topic.

In my work to investigate grassroots nationalism in 21st-century Korea, nationalism is in line with everyday nationalism. Here I reproduce the contribution and nature of everyday nationalism as observed by Knott (2015: 8).

By focusing on human agency, everyday nationalism has also emphasised the contingency and messiness of nationalism in everyday life, by highlighting the inconsistencies and contradictions in how nationalism and nationhood are expressed and experienced in everyday life (cf., Jones and Merriman 2009; Skey 2011).

I expect some of these characteristics will be observed from my investigations of grassroots nationalism in Korea by a group of people who have expressed their nationalism and national identities at the time of this research, i.e., 2016–2022.

Before closing my discussion of everyday nationalism, I make notes on methodological nationalism as its critique further justifies the need for everyday nationalism. Following the criticism of the studies of nationalism within the frame of methodological nationalism, as argued by Berger and Conrad (2015), Storm (2018), and Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002), a nation-state as a unit of analysis is limiting. In brief, methodological nationalism sets a nation-state as a unit of analysis and has an effect of “downwards conflation” (Archer 1995: 33,61), in that “the agency of the self in the construction of the nation” is understated and that there is no or little space for the agency of individual members (Cohen 1996: 804). Cohen strongly advocates that “the creativity and agency of the individual” should be recognized in understanding nationalism (p. 805). In this study, I will explore the ways in which there are competing groups and divisions within a nation-state in its process of nation-building and nation-reconstruction.

On the basis of methodological nationalism, “nationality” or what Anderson calls “nation-ness” (2006: 13) makes “a fundamental predicate of self-identity” (Cohen 1996: 804). Cohen (1996: 802–805) finds it problematic that the “nation” as a grand category downplays the agency of individual members of the nation and says nothing specific about its individual members. Instead, Cohen proposes “personal nationalism,” implying that “nationalism (qua personally constructed commitment to the nation) is

an expression of self-identity” (pp. 804–805). For example, a nationalist politician would formulate a collective version of nationalism for the sake of bringing together her electorate, but the individual member would personalize it. A successful politician should be able to enable individuals to relate it to their own needs and desires. Cohen argues that

An interpretation of the phenomenon of nationalism that fails to recognize its personal nature—that presumes its commonality of meaning among a population—must be a gross simplification and must therefore be misleading. It would also understate the creativity and agency of the individual (Cohen 1996: 805).

I find that Cohen’s proposition of personal nationalism clearly recognizes the dimensions of individual agents’ experiences and perceptions of nationalism. With reference to Scotland, Cohen (1996) illustrates personal nationalism as follows:

My self commands the Scottishness by which it is described. It is my *right* to command it; and it is an infringement of that right for the anthropologist or anyone else to treat my self, however it is described, as a mere reflex of some larger structural condition (*italic in original*, p. 806).

I recognize Cohen’s attempt to inject back the role of individual agency in the formation of nationalism and national identities. As noted, others perceive the concept of personal nationalism as privileging agency over structure, or conflating national identity into personal identity, thus blurring the distinction between the two (Hearn 2007: 666; Jenkins 2004). A revised version of nationalism that overcomes the problem of downplaying or overplaying individual agency, e.g., banal nationalism and personal nationalism, is “embedded nationalism,” which corresponds to my earlier discussion of everyday nationalism or nationalism from a critical realist perspective. Indeed, Hearn aptly points out that the question of theorizing nationalism in light of the above-mentioned discussion is a variant of the long-lasting “theoretical debates about the relationships between macro and micro processes, and structure and agency” (Hearn 2007: 671; Barnes 2001; Layder 2006). In line with Layder’s critical realist perspective, Hearn presents embedded nationalism as follows:

... personal and social dimensions of national identity are mediated by concrete and ongoing social settings through which power relations

get negotiated. The salience of symbolic resources, in this case national identities, depends on how they appear to illuminate struggles for control over one's more immediate social environment (Hearn 2007: 671).

In summary, I have started with my quest for the most appropriate theory of nationalism that represents grassroots nationalism. Banal nationalism, personal nationalism, everyday nationalism, and embedded nationalism are some of the prevalent models. There is much in common amongst them, yet there are some subtle differences. Whilst there is much insight from personal nationalism and everyday nationalism, embedded nationalism is most in line with the morphogenetic approach for the present work. Nonetheless, the point of these new forms of nationalism is about adequately recognizing the individual agency in understanding nationalism or national identities.

The relevant questions to explore further based on the current debates on the everyday approach to nationalism are as follows:

Despite its intention to appreciate the grassroots perspectives, what are the ways in which the everyday approach operates in reality? This is an investigation about “a theoretical account of how nationalism is grounded in everyday action” (Hearn and Antonsich 2018: 597).

Korean and international scholarship has written about the rise of nationalism in Korea as it was shaped by growing imperialism, such as Japanese and Chinese (Mitter 2013; Shin 2006). Despite many changes under the influence of globalization in the 21st century, and the close intertwining between globalization and nationalism (Osterhammel 2013: 696), there is little awareness of Korean nationalism with reference to everyday Korean politics and economy in contemporary Korea—the grassroots perspectives.

### **Nationalism and Grassroots Nationalism in Korea**

In the history of modern Korea, two major events continue to influence Korean nationalism and national identities in contemporary Korea: Japanese colonialism (1910–1945) and the Korean War (1950–1953). Dictatorial and democratic regimes have long deployed the legacies of these incidents to legitimize their national policies and the nation's future directions in all facets of governance. This is “state-nationalism” (Choi 1996; Yoon 2000; Cho 2008: 85), which is a form of “top-down” or elite nationalism which has translated into a ruling framework of nationalism to inform and control

the people of the Korean nation-state. In addition to those two major influential events which shaped the properties of Korean nationalism, numerous other incidents have reconstituted Korean nationalism, such as the *April 19 Revolution* in 1960, the *Democratic June Struggle* in 1987, the 1997 IMF Intervention at the time of the Asian economic crisis. These national incidents offered the leading regime justifications to engender new forms of nationalism to lead and control the people of the nation-state, resulting in top-down nationalism. For example, during the national economic crises such as the 1997 IMF intervention and restructuring, the President and the ruling political party were judged by their effectiveness and ability to rescue the whole nation from a crisis, which also contributed to the legitimacy of the regime.

Another form of nationalism that is live and prevalent in the middle of major national incidents, and often ignored but crucial in understanding the aspirations of the people is “bottom-up” or grassroots nationalism. People at the grassroots level reflect on whether or not their nation-state’s political stability and economic strength can sustain the wealth and wellbeing of *individuals* and the whole nation-state. Grassroots nationalism refers to and represents *people’s* perception, image, and anticipation of their nation-state.

Reviewing nationalism in Korea in brief for the last several decades, we notice its drastic changes, along with the nation’s rapidly emerging political and economic changes. During Park Chung-Hee’s dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s, a serious discussion of nationalism, which attempted to incorporate North Korea, was considered ideologically unacceptable and could not embrace the North’s ruling ideology of *juche* (*self-reliance*). However, in the 1980s, Korea’s economic development and its expansion of foreign diplomatic relations, coupled with democratic movements, stimulated the values of researching nationalism in the academic community as well as its values in the Korean society (Kim 2016: 218). Achieving democracy and facing globalization and multiculturalism, Korean nationalism, which had been centred on pure-blood nationalism, collected much criticism for its exclusivity (Shin 2006; Han 2016b). This is why “open nationalism” was called for (Kim 2009). However, Kim (2016: 218) questions what open nationalism is and laments that there has been little effort to investigate or suggest alternatives to the past understanding of Korean nationalism.

The prevalent scholarly and public understanding of Korean nationalism has been a “top-down nationalism,” engendered and led by significant national leaders and policies. Elitist and politically motivated interpretation of those leaders’ propositions to hold together the ethnicity-based nation, has been the dominant perspective on Korean nationalism. This trend has been



inevitable because of the common Korean belief in ethnic nationalism, that is, all Koreans share the same ancestors and are “blood-linked” (Shin 2006). I argue there is something more than “blood-linked” in Korean nationalism in the 21st century of individualism and materialism. This book explores how people at the grassroots level have encountered and coped with the major political and economic changes since the 1990s, spectacular achievements, and disasters within the nation and beyond, such as revisiting the legacies of Japanese imperialism, economic democratization, the trial for President Park Geun-Hye’s misconduct, and consequent reformulation of their new realities of the nation, resulting in and questioning grassroots nationalism and national identities. The book aims to depict a timely opportunity to investigate how grassroots nationalism is being manifested in almost never-before-seen ways.

As noted, over the last half a century of Korean history, the threat of possible aggression by North Korea, thus the need for Korean reunification, and anti-Japanese sentiment have provided a strong impetus for the whole Korean population to advocate ethnic nationalism. We are now in the digital era, especially web 2.0 to facilitate communications. Whilst we do not blindly support the idea of “every netizen as a publisher” there are fairly open platforms to express life aspirations and experiences. The Korean “netizens” and new Koreans in prosperous Korea may not be as militant as past university students who rose up against the Korean authoritarian regime thirty years ago, but they have open internet space to express their views in the context of free and advanced Korean politics, which leads to the mass manifestation of their aspirations towards their nation *offline*. This is how the contemporary public expresses their struggles in search of their individual and national identities—a fundamental human effort to make sense of their existence. These efforts represent “grassroots nationalism.”

“Bottom-up” or “grassroots” nationalism in this book refers to a “set of bottom-up discourses on nationalism re-shaping national imaginations among people, bringing the nation closer to the everyday experience of the general public” (Ma 2007: 149). For example, President Kim Dae-Jung adopted a neo-liberal economic policy and maintained a distance from the nationalism of a protective and defensive nature, under the economic management of Korea by the International Monetary Fund (Chōn 2003: 48). The nationalism was generated to financially protect and rescue the nation from bankruptcy. However, Kim’s regime, the industries, and the advocates for neo-liberalism led to an economic nationalism that was designed to justify the workers’ responsibility to bear a “share of difficult times,” to cope with long working hours and inadequate salaries (Kwōn 1994: 16; Chōn

2003: 48). The mass responses such as the “gold-collection campaign” during the 1997 economic crisis to rescue the nation-state (Cheon 2017) are part of grassroots nationalism.

However, the problem of top-down or elite-led nationalism, as opposed to embedded or grassroots nationalism, is that the political leaders need to “create a discourse with which people of different minds, differently located in a society, can feel comfortable” (Cohen 1996: 810). The political leaders readily claim to know what people think and want, and even attempt to validate they have their claims right, manipulating the media and putting their own words into people’s minds (p. 810). Yet top-down nationalism remains problematic. The reason to Herzfeld (1992: 49) is straightforward: “nationalism imposed from above fails ‘to recognize the role of the ordinary person in taking the grand images presented by the leadership and recasting them in the more familiar terms of local experience’” (cited in Cohen 1996: 811). The kind of elite-imposed nationalism may serve the elites’ political goals for a short term, but may not endure for the needs of the people or for the sake of higher values such as liberty, equality, fraternity, and peace.

Post the Korean War, nearly all the political regimes have been preoccupied with building the economy, under the threat from North Korea, as a way to claim their political legitimacy (Han and Sharp 1997). The political leaders’ effort to create a shared discourse with the grassroots has been rather limited despite the latter’s persistent call for a democratic nation, politically and economically, in search of their personal and national identities, which make up integral elements of grassroots nationalism.

A good portion of Koreans from all age groups have developed a distaste for Korean nationalism, undemocratic regimes, and neo-liberal economic policy, demonstrated through many mass rallies. Some forms of Korean nationalism are considered outdated and irrelevant and this is a reason to suggest an “open nationalism” in the contemporary context, which can help Korea to overcome the problems resulting from divided Korea, millions of Korean diaspora overseas, and newly settled Koreans (Kim 2009: 42; Youn 2013). I contend that the dominance of the rhetorical top-down nationalism (Chang 2014) needs to be questioned and many call for open nationalism. Korean nationalism remains a strong force to hold together the Korean nation-state and its people. Top-down nationalism is, at times, undoubtedly essential for pertinent ideologies to settle and remain a significant part of a nation’s identity. However, it is also vital to have a good understanding of how the pertinent ideologies or top-down policies infiltrate into the lives of the people in the nation. Grassroots nationalism has sustaining power to have a lasting influence. Yet, there is a severe lack of an empirical

understanding of grassroots nationalism in Korea. That is, although there have been continued grassroots and civic movements ever since the Korean War, a critical investigation of such movements in recent years is in need, especially to understand what the grassroots think about a series of notable social events which have much to do with political and economic democratization. Further, it is of utmost importance for the leaders to listen to the concerns at the grassroots in depth. This listening is a natural part of an advanced democracy (Dobson 2014). Also, it is critical to investigate what is in the “everyday minds” of the Korean people if the nation is to remain a coherent nation-state.

Since the end of the Korean War, most Korean presidents such as Rhee Syngman and Park Chung-Hee, Roh Tae-Woo, and Kim Young-Sam deployed nationalism as a measure to legitimize their political regimes (Kim 2016: 220–222). However, Kim Yung-Myung (2016: 222) points out that the kinds of nationalism deployed were generally not centred on the nation’s “independence, self-reliance, integration, expansion, and glory” (p. 230) or “political-economic nationalism” (p. 222). For example, Park Chung-Hee’s nationalism often promoted ultra-nationalistic sentiment, culture, and tradition (p. 222). Kim (2016: 222) points out that throughout Korean history nationalism has been low and nationalistic sentiment high and that there are two reasons for this: (1) toadyism in Korea’s relations with powerful neighbours and (2) pure-bloodism (Kim 2011).

Kim’s criticism of the studies of Korean nationalism is that the usage of the concept, nationalism, is too broad and this problem partially results from the adoption of the English word, nationalism, itself, which does not “properly distinguish between the nation, state, and citizenship which are all ingredients of nationalism” (Kim 2016: 247).<sup>8</sup> The English word, nationalism, is translated in Korean as 민족주의, 국가주의 or 국민주의, of which the focal point is the nation, state, and citizenship, respectively (Kim, 2016: 225).<sup>9</sup> As a result, Kim points out that past studies of Korean nationalism do not separate nationalism from nationalistic feelings and sentiment, and passion for the nation. However, in light of his own suggested definition of nationalism as an ideology in pursuit of a nation’s “independence, self-reliance, integration and glory,” everyday nationalism in operation among the ordinary people is very likely to incorporate the nation, state, and citizenship. Moreover, Kim’s subscription (or his desired form) of nationalism

8 In this book, the Korean nation-state and Korean state have been used interchangeably.

9 I am in complete agreement with Kim (2016: 229) that a blunt adoption of the use of the English word nationalism in the study of *minjokjuui*, *gukgajuui* or *gukminjuui* is problematic.

to the kind of nationalism that leads the movement towards “national independence, integration, and self-reliance” (p. 247) seems in line with or limited to a top-down approach rather than a bottom-up understanding of what nationalism is. In this respect, past studies’ adoption of the broad concept of nationalism had an advantage in seeking to understand everyday nationalism.

In brief, Kim raises the problems with the ways in which nationalism has been deployed by the elites and the scholars, blurring the boundary between nationalism and nationalistic sentiment. I argue that Kim’s definition of nationalism is elitist and makes it difficult to research and discuss everyday nationalism. In terms of everyday nationalism, nationalism cannot be distinguished from nationalistic feelings and sentiment, culture, and tradition as well as a passion for the nation. Kim’s argument seems to unintentionally downplay the voices of ordinary people and the possibility of what may be called “grassroots democracy,” resulting in “throwing the baby with the bathwater.” They are “part and parcel” of nationalism that can be manifested differently at different times by different members and people of a nation-state. After all, the grassroots’ expression of nationalism is far broader and deeper than the elites.

### Calculated Nationalism

Before moving to discuss a critical realist view of nationalism, I wish to note a driving element in the operation of grassroots nationalism in South Korea. It is “calculated nationalism.” Blurring boundaries of the nation-states and new forms of political action have put the notion of citizenship in flux. What we have known as a citizen has faced a contradiction and an expansion in recent decades. For example, Donati (2016: 41) argues that what he calls “a transmodern (societal) citizenship is currently springing from a nascent global civil society rather than from the nation-state.”<sup>10</sup> Donati (p. 64) adds that citizenship is not a matter to grant “*from above*,” but an actual experience—“the result of a *bottom-up* approach, i.e., originating in the subjects’ wills—of belonging to a number of relations governing

10 More specifically, Donati (2016: 63) notes, “Societal citizenship lays emphasis on the sociability and relational characters of the rights that concern it, since it consists of a number of primary and secondary rights and duties governing the individuals’ mutual relations. It highlights both the relational character of individual rights and duties and the rights and duties pertaining to the civil and civic forms of association.”

individuals, families and broader social groups as the subjects of citizenship in particular times and places” (my italics). That is, the subjects are not only governed by nationalism in particular times and places, but form and “practice” their own kinds according to their calculated needs as exemplified by many grassroots social and political movements in Korea.

There are diverse groups of people who will attribute their civil activities as essential elements of their citizenship such as artistic groups, advocates for the environment, advocates for gender equality, etc. However, it is increasingly becoming less prevalent that one’s citizenship is largely based on or related to the rights and duties required for the existence and operation of a nation-state. For example, when the Korean nation-state was assumedly built on ethnic nationalism, Korean nationalism was commonly understood accordingly. However, the influx of newly settled or naturalized “Koreans” into the boundary of Korean citizenship and the expansion of the national boundaries have significantly changed the context. Thus, the reunification of the two Koreas, because of their blood relations, does not make sense to the younger generation whereas it does to the older generation. In this respect, the younger generation’s nationalism is much more calculated than that of the older generation (Han 2018). In fact, so is it even to the older generation. The apparent coming of calculated nationalism in the politically free and economically affluent Korea is not an accident but an expected consequence. C. Brough Macpherson’s concept of “possessive individualism” sheds light on calculated nationalism (Cohen 1996; Macpherson 1964).

... the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of larger social whole, but as an owner of himself. ... Society consists of exchange between proprietors (Macpherson 1962: 3).

In the continuing process of Korean society shifting from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, the Korean people are increasingly finding their worth and value as the proprietor of their own skills and capacities valuable enough for exchange. In brief, Koreans are becoming more individualized and this is increasingly reflected in their membership of and representation of the nation-state with sovereignty. This is not to say such representation was previously non-existent, but that it is becoming more apparent in recent decades.

The rights and duties attached to citizenship have gone through changes especially in Europe and North America since the concept of citizenship

was established after the end of World War Two (Donati 2016). From the viewpoint of a nation-state, on one hand, a “smooth operation of the citizen’s rights and duties through a relational management” has become an urgent and ongoing issue for most nations under the influence of globalization (p. 54). On the other hand, how an individual citizen perceives their civil, political, social, and human rights (p. 56),<sup>11</sup> how economic rights are achieved, and how they can relatively easily meet their duties are serious matters. When citizenship was largely based on “ethnic nationalism,” Koreans were more willing to concede their rights but meet their duties. However, they now see their nation-state to be politically, economically, and internationally “competent” and their expectations of the nation-state in terms of their rights and duties have changed significantly. This is how the birth of calculated nationalism has come about.

What is the significance of calculated nationalism? The 2008 Candlelight vigil is noted as a turning point from which civil movements occurred due to their frustration over their immediate personal concerns, e.g., the consequence of consuming the beef affected by foot and mouth disease (Hong 2017), which implies that civil movements prior to 2008 might have been predominantly about national concerns or nationalism in the context of nation-building rather than an individual pursuit. The 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution* is unique as it results from the combination of calculated personal as well as national concerns. For example, Noh Hyeong-Il and Yang Eun-Kyeong (2017: 16, cited in Jung 2017: 261–262) argued that the attendance at the candlelight demonstrations was an effort in search of identities and is motivated by individualistic benefits.

Other related examples are as follows. First, during the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, North and South Korea attempted to form a unified women’s hockey team of North and South Korea as the North Korean team decided to join the game only a few weeks prior to the official play. It was for the sake of promoting a harmonious ethnic relationship between the two Koreas. Young people responded negatively to the removal of South Korean players for the sake of including North Korean players. The South Korean players’ hard work and right to hold onto their own participation were considered more important than advancing the North and South relationship. Second, Seon Dong-Ryul, the baseball team coach for the 2018 Asian Game, faced severe criticism for selecting the list of final players not strictly based on merit. Koreans are now much less likely to accept such unfairness. In brief, calculated nationalism refers to an ideology that

11 Donati 2000—this has been cited in Donati (2016: 55).

combines nationalism, national sentiment, and individualism for the sake of cultural and economic interests. Much in common with “calculated nationalism” is Emma Campbell’s “globalized cultural nationalism” with reference to the young Koreans’ adoption of universal values such as modernity and transnationalism in the context of emergent structural properties, e.g., globalization and neo-liberalism (Campbell 2016, ch.4). I contend that contemporary Koreans consider economic interests as important as their cultural values, and that calculated nationalism applies across all age groups in general.<sup>12</sup> Cho Younghan’s (Cho 2020: 187) “individuated nationalism” is along the same line. Cho (2008) presents two sports personnel as “a national individual” and points out that the Korean economic crisis during the IMF’s intervention in the late 1990s offered Koreans the opportunity to “rethink the notions of nationalism and national development” (Cho 2008: 85). Similarly, the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution* made a predominant proportion of Koreans ask, “Is this a proper nation-state?” This question also raises a fundamental question about the notions of Korean nationalism and national identities.

## The Morphogenetic Approach

In my review of how nationalism can be best researched and adequately represent the viewpoints of the people of a nation-state, the scholars have noted that a fundamental issue embedded in the debate is rather about the debate on how social scientists can incorporate and deal with structure and agency in their understanding of the society (Hearn 2007: 671; Barnes 2001; Layder 2006). I now extend the relationship between structure/culture and agency to how one can examine grassroots nationalism and social movements.

Theoretically, there are two broad approaches to the reasons for the occurrence of large-scale civil grassroots movements: agential and structural. First, agential approaches incorporate the following three strands: (1) analysis of the participants, (2) political elites’ abuse of power and authority, and (3) the capacities of existing civil movements’ organizations (Heo and Yoon 2018: 144–146). Second, structural approaches measure the following: (1) the level of openness or exclusivity of the political system (e.g., the ruling party’s openness to opposition/minor parties), (2) the regime’s level of oppression and

12 Campbell (2016) argues young people developed negative attitudes towards reunification. However, the North-South summit in 2018 showed otherwise.

instability, (3) the level of conflicts within the ruling regime, and (4) the level of alliances between social movement groups and other socio-cultural and economic elite groups (Heo and Yoon 2018: 144–147). However, the agential approach suffers from “a structural vacuum,” and the structural perspective ignores the morphogenesis of the people. While the agency of the participants can be analytically separated from the structure and culture (e.g., analytical dualism), an explication with one without the other is inadequate.

For example, empirically, there have been numerous and competent Korean publications explicating the origins of the Candlelight protests. What are the key strands of the study of the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*? One notable is a “cultural turn.” Kim Sungmoon (2018) sees the *Candlelight Revolution* as an attempt to restore civil society in Korea in which people closely practice Confucianism as a moral and philosophical doctrine (p. 3). Kim contends that a central underlying idea of civil society in Korea is “neither economic interest nor liberal pluralism, concentrated on negative liberty and the right to freedom of association, but passion for democratic self-government” (p. 4). Undoubtedly, Confucian principles undergird democratic self-government. However, a Korean understanding that a Confucian democratic government has encouraged the candlelight holders to take the social action is open to debate and is largely “cultural.” In other words, Kim argues that the “oppositional, resistant, and rebellious civil society” has been an underlying source of the Korean democratization, and that Confucianism is the ideational engine of such a civil society (p. 5). I argue this cultural turn is insufficient to explain the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*, for example.

Here, I present a morphogenetic perspective, utilizing many competent studies and analysing protesters’ public speeches registered on YouTube and other (social) media outlets, with reference to calculated nationalism. The latter is an attempt to acknowledge that a specific context of any large-scale protest needs to be taken into account. In general, Korean scholarship in nationalism has been at the centre of social sciences due to the geopolitical context of the Korean peninsula, based on its colonialism, the division of the Korean peninsula after the Korean War, and rapid westernization and globalization. Critical and insightful studies have been produced, addressing poignantly some of the features as continuing to affect the formulation of Korean nationalism (e.g., Shin 2006; Seo 2004; Han 2016b). However, newly emerging forces within the nation and beyond the national boundary have crept into the dynamics of Korean politics, economy, and culture. For example, the younger generation’s higher expectations in an affluent Korea as well as their disappointment and anxiety in the neo-liberal context have



profoundly affected their perception of Korean nationalism. I am proposing a systematic approach to understanding contemporary Korean nationalism as a social movement.

### Critical Realism and Analytical Dualism

According to critical realism, the depth of social reality is ontologically stratified, and there are three different domains: the real, the actual, and the empirical. The *real* domain represents causally operative structures, at the level at which causal laws and mechanisms operate and engender socio-economic phenomena in certain ways. The *actual* domain represents events produced by causal laws or mechanisms (i.e., the *real* domain). Most of these events may not be easily observed, but a small number may be. The latter make up the *empirical* domain (Mingers 2004; Han 2016b: 16), which we can measure or observe.

How are the grassroots bringing about changes to Korean society in recent years? This is an empirical question that I attempt to understand based on a critical realist approach which is a broader camp of morphogenetic approach. Three assumptive terms in understanding social change and movement are structure, culture, and agency, which are the three ingredients of explaining social change (Porpora 2013: 27). Society is composed of two parts, i.e., structure (material) and culture (ideational). While structure and culture are often conflated, they are not the same, but conceptually different in sociological studies. A social scientist's theoretical and methodological standing is based on their understanding of the mediation between structure/culture and agency. Here, I follow a critical realist standing in that personal emergent powers' mediation between structure/culture and agency leads to either reproduction of or change to the society. Structure, culture, and agency hold their own unique and varied emergent powers. These structural, cultural, and personal emergent powers, which are necessarily related components of social actions, are causally effective on each other. Structural and cultural emergent powers enable and constrain individuals and their use of personal emergent powers to moderate such influence on their life chances (Archer 2000; Wimalasena 2017). Archer's morphogenetic approach enables us to "address the issue of separate but entangled processes in a way that does not lead to central conflation" (Clegg 2016: 501). Therefore, a social analysis should incorporate the separate elements of structural, cultural, and personal emergent powers individually, and "their association with each other should be understood and explained" (Wimalasena 2017: 396). Let me elaborate on theoretical assumptions on the key terms, structure, culture, and agency.

Structure refers to *systems of human relations* among human actors occupying social positions—relations such as power, competition, exploitation, and dependency, ethnocentrism, welfare policy. Thus structure precisely refers to “relations among social positions that human actors occupy” (Porpora 2013: 27; Archer 1995: 178; Porpora 2015: 99).<sup>13</sup> Uneven relations of authority, political or economic power may lead to corruption, bribe, or abuse of such power (e.g., *gapjil*, forced labour). This critical realist definition of social structure allows for “emergent material” relations as follows. According to Porpora (2007: 425),

... although all human relations are established and maintained by some human activity, emergently material relations exist—with independent effects of their own—even apart from agents’ knowledge of their existence. Examples include relations that—even without agents’ knowledge—are exploitative or that otherwise place agents’ interest in conflict.

This definition is closely in line with a Marxist political economy perspective in recognizing that human competition to acquire better and more material resources as part of living their life to protect themselves from nature or to elevate their socio-economic or cultural positions in comparison with the rest of the society. This point can be reiterated by “Marx’s insight that we are committed to continuous practical activity in a material world, where subsistence is dependent upon the working relationship between us and things, which cannot be reduced to the relations ‘between the ideas of men’” (Archer 1995: 291).

Culture is “the realm of intersubjectivity, ideas, and ideational influences” (Archer 1996: xiii, cited in de Souza 2014: 146). To put this differently, culture refers to ideas, theories, beliefs, and values (Horrocks 2009: 51) or the “corpus of existing intelligibilia—by all things capable of being grasped, deciphered, understood or known by someone” (Archer 1996: 104).<sup>14</sup> In a realist tradition, Archer (1998) makes three propositions in regard to culture: “(1) the nature

13 Broadly speaking there are four different conceptions of social structure: “(1) patterns of aggregate behaviour that are stable over time; (2) lawlike regularities that govern the behaviour of social facts; (3) rules and resources; and (4) systems of human relations among social positions” (Porpora 2007: 422).

14 Archer makes “an analytically important distinction between Cultural System and the Socio-Cultural. The Cultural Systems refers to the existing intelligibilia: the ideas that can be expressed at any one time (whether these are actually expressed or not)” (Clegg 2016: 500). A best known example is Marx’s notion of “relations of production.” Donati (2016: 54), in his definition of structure, includes “the various cultural, normative, political and economic dimensions of society.”

of ideas is that they are real; (2) the sharing of ideas is contingent; and (3) the interplay between 'ideas' (cultural system) and 'groups' (socio-cultural interaction or level) is dynamic and accounts for cultural elaboration (modification of existing ideas and/or introduction of new ones)" (cited in de Souza 2014: 146). Unlike structure, if anyone questions where culture resides, it is ultimately in the shared consciousness people carry around in individuals' heads (Davies and Harre, 1990, cited in Porpora 2013: 32).

Agency refers to the persons in a society, i.e., who may take the roles of agents or actors. Agent is one who exerts power, or has the power to act. Actor is one who takes part in a situation to bring about change to or reproduce structure or culture. While culture is what people collectively create, agency is what they individually do with it (Porpora 2013: 27).

Making no distinction between structure, culture, and agency or conflating between culture and structure, or conflating between structure and agency is a shortcoming of the theories put forward by Bourdieu and Giddens (1981, 1984, 1991). Giddens, for example, redefines structure as "rules," thereby conflating structure into agency (Porpora 2013: 26). Social constructionist perspectives of self and identity (e.g., Althusser 2000; Butler 2006; Rose 1996) downplay "individual characters and unique subjective responses," producing an inadequate understanding of the intersections between the individual and society (Layder 2006: 274; Hearn 2007: 671). Shortcomings of other strands of theories include downwards conflation (e.g., sociological holism, structuralism, methodological collectivism), whereby individual agents are dissolved into structure or culture,<sup>15</sup> or upward conflation (methodological individualism), whereby the opposite occurs (Archer 1995: 34, 46; Porpora 2013: 28, 32). Similar to the problems of downward conflation and methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), Anthony Cohen (1996) notes that the "nation" as a grand unit of analysis does not say anything specific about the individual members of a nation-state. Instead, Archer proposes analytical dualism, arguing that "structure and agency are dialectically related but ontologically and analytically distinct" (Porpora 2007: 425). Neither structure nor agency has primary control over the other. Porpora (2013: 27) further illustrates distinctions between culture and structure by comparing the ideal with the material, the subjective with the objective, and notes that the former in each pair falls in the realm of culture and the latter in the realm of structure.

15 Other studies focus predominantly on the broader context and structure of the society (Heo and Yoon 2018).

Persons are more than just passive occupiers of the capacity to be reflexive about their emotional needs and life chances. They have material interests and idealistic beliefs, out of which they can actively express their social concerns to translate them into action (Porpora 2013: 28). That is, a person's properties and powers, through internal conversation, actively mediate between agency and structural/cultural circumstances (Porpora 2013: 28). This ignites a start for social change. Having now introduced critical realist definitions of structure, culture, and agency, what are the ways they are interlinked to each other in bringing about social change? Human beings are constantly working together collectively as they intendedly or unintendedly contribute to reproducing or changing the structure or culture of society. This is how they can maintain or modify their collective identities as components of "maintaining or transforming the socio-cultural structures which they inherit at birth" (Archer 1995: 255).

As noted already, personal emergent powers' mediation between structure/culture and agency takes a crucial role in bringing about change or no change. Individuals in society vary from one to another in regard to the extent they exert influence on society for a change. They can be described as persons, agents, and actors as follows.

### **Persons, Agents, and Actors**

While the individual members necessarily inherit the social structure and culture, which enable and restrain any activities of the social agents, it is the latter who deliberate on the reproduction or change of the society and exert influence on the society to take an effect. Archer calls this continuing process of deliberation, internal conversation. The significant role of society in this process is undeniable.

People are social beings. Society is a necessary precondition for people's existence and also forms an essential part of their internal deliberations, which are the key mechanism for the agency to relate to the social structure and vice versa (Archer 2003: 117). Archer reiterates that "without nullifying the privacy of our inner lives, our sociality is there inside them because it is there inside us" (Archer 2003: 117). The significance of the internal conversation as personal emergent power (PEP) is that it mediates between structure and agency, i.e., mediating "the impact of the causal powers of society" (structural emergent properties (SEPs) and cultural emergent properties (CEPs)) upon each one of us as agency (p. 118). Unpacking this mediating process, one should be aware of how agency responds to, and exerts its influence on, the causal powers of society (structural and cultural

emergent properties). Archer's solution is to make a distinction between agents, actors, and persons—a stratified model of people, which I elaborate on below (Archer 2003: 118).

Humans are all involved in the internal conversation, alternating subject and object, i.e., talking with, listening to, and responding to themselves (Archer 2003: 121). This inbuilt capacity is a way for humans to engage in maneuvering their life in society and is manifested through reflexivity. This is because society is consistently part of what constitutes us the human, and thus society naturally enters the internal conversations (p. 122). It is an inherent human capacity to reflect upon “our own objective social circumstances and the relationship of these circumstances to our personal projects” (p. 122). The characteristics and the ways to engage in internal conversation differ from person to person. Archer presented four broad types of reflexivities: Communicative-, Autonomous-, Meta-, and Fractured reflexivities, depending upon what their ultimate concerns are (p. 122). These reflexivities are also the processes of “becoming the kind of Actor whose role is the social expression of our personal identities,” actively rather than passively (p. 122). Personal identity can also induce causal efficacy, and, for instance, has the capacity to transform our initial agential status and continue to modify our subsequent placements over a period. As persons, we can also mobilize “the causal power to personify our roles as Actors in a unique manner, to modify them incrementally, or to find a role personally wanting once we have come to occupy it” (p. 122).

#### *A Stratified Model of “People”: Agency, Actors and Persons*

In order to engage in unpacking the mediation through the internal conversation between structural/cultural emergent properties and agency, Archer (2003) introduces a stratified conception of the human being, i.e., persons, agents, and actors. A crucial question one can ask in differentiating the stratification of humans is as follows; “*who* is actively personifying any social role in a particularistic manner and thus participating in active role-making rather than passive role-taking” (Archer 2003: 121)? This question is the key to *who* or *what* different/specific *persons* make of their initial involuntary placement as social agents (*primary agents*), then sooner or later make of their voluntary placement as social agents (*corporate agents*), and consequently to *what* they do as voluntary *social Actors* (p. 121). To re-iterate basic points, Agent is one who exerts power, or has the power to act. Actor is one who takes part in a situation.<sup>16</sup>

16 <https://wikidiff.com/agent/actor>

### Agency

First of all, agents refer to “collectives sharing the same life-chances” and an agent refers to a person holding a position who receives parts of scarce resources available in the society. That is, everyone is an agent (p. 118).<sup>17</sup> However, not all the agents are the same in terms of the level of privileges that they enjoy. All the members of a society are “involuntarily placed in a collectivity” who share the same life-chances and they are referred to as *primary* agents (p. 118). As the primary agents grow and mature over time, they sooner or later find themselves or voluntarily locate somewhere along the spectrum ranging from the least privileged to the highly privileged. The circumstances of primary agents at the time of birth condition their potential as to what type of Actors they would become, their choice of becoming a particular type is a voluntaristic act. Their aim is to express their ultimate concerns and values through a role(s) and translate them into action (pp. 118–119).

*Corporate agents* are the ones who are active with clear sets of interest and consequently mould the context for all actors (Archer 1995: 260). *Primary agents* inhabit the context that Corporate agents form for all actors. This act of inhabiting the context reformulates the social milieu that Corporate agents want to control (p. 260). Primary agents tend to be passive while they can grow to be Corporate agents, pursuing social movements.

Agents' level of knowledgeability of reality differs, depending upon their life trajectories. Some agents are well informed about the conditions of the society in which they live and others have “defective, deficient and distorted knowledge” (Archer 1995: 252). The level of knowledgeability is likely to influence which agents turn out to be actors and what type of them.

*Actors* are the formerly agents who self-consciously conceive of, and take up, a role(s) of social projects in which they thought worthwhile investing their effort. The roles will necessarily accompany social identity which represents who they are (Archer 2003: 118). Thus, taking up “roles” or socially expressing our personal identities is a distinctive feature of Actors (Archer 1995: 276; 2003: 122). Social movements generally involve struggles among *actors* holding social positions and representing multiple parties, supported by differing power and resources (Porpora 2013: 31).

*Persons* refer to human beings with common humanity. They are the anchorage upon which the Social Agent and the Social Actor are based (Archer 1995: 280–281). Continuity of consciousness is an integral part of a person (p. 283). Whether as an Agent (becoming a member of social

17 That is, one's existence without the need of resources is not possible.

movements) or as an Actor (personifying roles in specific ways), it is the *same* person with self-awareness who is concerned with constraints and enablements in what they do, and the same person with self-consciousness is aware that their reactions today will affect what they need to deal with tomorrow. This is how the person constantly questions “the meaning and explanation of social action” they engage in (p. 282). An implication for society and its change is part of the persons’ consciousness that they own; and the persons’ own expectations create the sense of responsibilities as their own that “someone ought to do something about it” (p. 283). Unless the persons have a sense of responsibility, no change in the society will be brought about. Emphasizing the continuity of consciousness, Archer (p. 287) notes that being human is to exist as “the body plus,” “the plus” of which refers to consciousness.

In addition to (1) self-awareness, every person has (2) personal and (3) social identities, all three of which are properties and powers of a person (Archer 2003: 119). Basic human identity is fundamental to a person and personal identity is formulated first and prior to our sociality. “Social identity is emergent from personal identity” (Archer 1995: 284). Pointing to the pre-existence of personal identity, Archer contends that living persons necessarily entail “properties of persons which are non-social nature. ... *Homo sapiens* constitute a natural kind, which as such is fundamentally irreducible to the imprint of society” (p. 287).

Personal identity (as a personal emergent property) refers to one’s achievement in relation to their necessary involvement in their facing three realities—nature, practice and society (Archer 2003: 120). Personal identity is concerned about our “physical well-being in the natural order, about our performative achievement in the practical order and about our self-worth in the social order” (p. 120). Thus, personal identity precisely represents “what we care about most and the commitments we make accordingly” (p. 120). Social identity is “a sub-set of personal identity” and refers to an emergent property and power of a person, deriving from their social concerns and roles (p. 120).

The stratified conception of the self can provide insights into the question of the ways in which how Agency engages Structure/Culture in order to initiate social movements. Archer’s (p. 121) following questions are such questions that realist research is bound to ask, again:

*Who* is actively personifying any social role in a particularistic manner and thus participating in active role-making rather than passive role-taking[?]  
This is the key to what different *persons* make of their initial involuntary

placement as *social agents* and to what they do as voluntary social *Actors* (Archer 2003: 121, italics in original).

In brief, it is the personal emergent powers (PEPs) that initiate the internal conversation that mediates between structure and agency, thus either morphogenesis (social change) or morphostasis (social reproduction) occurs (Archer 2003: 121). To put it differently, the mediation between structure and agency resembles “how external experiences interact with internal deliberations to co-determinate our life-courses” (2003: 123). Our modified life-chances have an effect to modify us as individual humans, but also exert influence on structure, i.e., double morphogenesis.

“How society is both part of our constitution and part of our internal conversations” (Archer 2003: 123–124) is at the heart of the stratified conception of the self—agents, actors, and persons, which is further illustrated with reference to a person’s life trajectory. Once a person is born and until she matures, she remains disengaged from other things/resources and other people. The properties of this *self/person* (“I”) are private rather than public, and individual rather than collective. The mature self realizes the involuntary nature of social characteristics in terms of how she acquired them from her family and adjacent social context. These “object” properties constitute part of a *primary social agent* (“me”) as well as the collectivity who are similarly privileged or under-privileged. The primary agent still remains private rather than public, and is reluctant to take any collective action. *Corporate agents* (“we”) are now willing to participate in social action, collectively and publicly. *Actors* (“you”) take leader roles to deal with social concerns as a way of expressing the most pressing and ultimate concerns (Archer 2003: 124). This stratified conception of a person is a continuing cycle to complete and restart through an ongoing internal conversation, which leads to a change in a person and exerts influence on the society—double morphogenesis.

### **Social Change and Morphogenesis: Structural, Cultural, and Group Elaboration**

A society consists of particular structural properties that characterize its socio-political and economic elements as affecting the life chances of the people. Structural or cultural properties (which make up structure or culture respectively) are not static but continue to go through a change. Structural properties are not what contemporary actors can create in a short span of



time through manipulation of material resources or human-created governance (Archer 1995: 138). Structural properties, which have been passed on to contemporary actors, can face internal or external stimulus by “material existents” (raw resources) or “human instantiation” (rule-governed). The stimulus may be intended or unintended. Thus, consequently produced are emergent properties, which will exert influence towards forming structural properties. As I am interested in understanding social change from the viewpoints of actor-centred changes to structural changes, it is crucial for the actors to be critical of current structural properties which may be translated into desirable or undesirable, or “neutral” social phenomena. What ignites actors to identify social phenomena or their related structural properties problematic enough and lead them to engage in a social movement? What kinds of capacities or experiences are required of actors? According to Daniel Little (2012), the overall process of social movement and change is as follows:

Agents are formed within a set of social structures—norms, language communities, power relationships. The genesis of the agent occurs within the context of these structures. On a larger time scale, the structures themselves change as a result of the activities and choices of the historically situated individuals who make them up.<sup>18</sup>

Summarizing this from the viewpoints of actors as a set of cycles over a period of timeframes could be as follows: socio-cultural conditioning of groups → group interaction → group elaboration (Archer 1995: 248). Archer contends that people are necessarily stratified in terms of their “prior structural conditioning and individual differences between persons,” which enables the researchers to account for “the regular patternings of wants in different parts of society and of the personal differences which make resulting actions something quite different from mechanical responses to hydraulic pressures” (p. 252). As the agency is involved in group elaboration, this elaboration which is social in nature, necessarily involves and accompanies structural and cultural elaboration. It is worth noting that human agency is always full of creativity, depending upon a particular time and place (Joas 1997; Porpora 2013: 29).

Broadly speaking, social change is a result of a dialectical relationship between human agency and the contexts in which those agents are placed. The contexts include structure, culture, and physical surroundings (Porpora

18 Little, Daniel. May 23, 2012. “The Social World as Morphogenesis,” <https://understanding-society.blogspot.com/2012/05/social-world-as-morphogenesis.html>, accessed January 22, 2019.

2013: 29). There are a few kinds of change we can observe. First, new inventions such as the computer, motor vehicle, and smartphone have brought about changes to capital-labour relations, marketing, distribution methods, divisions of labour, cultural consciousness, and other prevalent culture and social relations. Thus, a change initiated by the agency who was situated in an “earlier” context now brought about changes to structural and cultural context (Porpora 2013: 30). Second is the type of change that is brought about with the change of culture, i.e., ideas, theories, beliefs, and values, which can influence architecture. This refers to a kind of paradigm shift. For example, the Protestant ethic has brought about how Christians have approached the economy in their everyday life (Weber 1958 (1930)). The third kind of change may take place due to an accumulation of knowledge and skills within a sector. The change could be much less dramatic as it can take place within a genre or an existing framework. For example, a meso-level of change such as a post-Fordist production regime in the 1980s accompanying the incorporation of new information technologies and increased white-collar services has not led to an alternative to capitalism, but notable modifications to it including increased inequality (Porpora 2013: 30).

Having discussed double morphogenesis—individual agents going through changes themselves and also exerting emergent powers on the society—as well as the changes occurring to the structural and cultural contexts, how do these social changes get elaborated?

### **Individuals’ and Groups’ Elaboration of Their Values**

The question of what forms the centre of the key features in explaining a social phenomenon has given birth to diverse social theories and new ones are still being created. As noted earlier, I consider the agency and structure debate a key to explaining and understanding social phenomena. Critical realist debate on agency and structure is prevalent and well accepted by social scientists although there are diverse approaches to this debate. Individual agency and social structure are not separate from each other, but are closely intertwined in the ways in which a social phenomenon is formulated. Thus, the agent and structure are indispensable parts of one mechanism that produces a particular social phenomenon. A social phenomenon impacts on, as well as is influenced by, other social phenomena, which continue to bring about changes to the relevant social phenomena. Empirical observation of individual agents only is limited in revealing a full picture of a social phenomenon. It is pointless to contemplate a complete structural control over an individual agent or an agent’s complete independence from the

**Figure 2.1 The Elaboration of Structure, Culture, and Agency with Reference to the Morphogenesis of the 2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution**

*Structural, cultural and socio-economic conditioning (leading to ideational and discursive shaping):* Political and economic structure with much legacy of dictatorship and exploitation of workers (Tasks: Identify some internal & necessary (i.e., emergent) consequences from contingent unintended consequences; Work out internal/necessary and contingent relations within the structural properties; As a result of internal or external factors, are there incompatibilities/contradictions or complementarities?)

T<sup>1</sup>

*Socio-cultural and group interaction (leading to ideational and discursive reshaping or reinforcement):* Actors mobilize a large proportion of people (persons and primary/corporate agents); Using social media; Large scale candlelight meetings accompanying music and performance; Broadcasting the meetings through YouTube; Putting pressure on the government (Unintended consequences may serve the interests of some agents/actors; What are the modes of interaction in structural and cultural systems?: Defensive, Concessionary, Competitive or Opportunistic)

T<sup>2</sup>

T<sup>3</sup>

*Structural, cultural and group morphogenesis or morphostasis (leading to the elaboration of reproduction):* Impeachment of President Park Geun-Hye; Presidential election called; New momentum built to democratize the politics and economy; Intention to re-configure the future of the nation<sup>19</sup>

T<sup>4</sup>

Source: Based on Archer (1995: 264)

given structure (Lee 1994: 184). Individual agents' actions are enabled as well as restrained by the given structure (Bhaskar 1979).

Despite the close intertwining between the agent and the structure, critical realists have analytically separated agent from structure in order to illustrate how a social phenomenon is produced in an open system of a society. This section is to explicate a critical realist perspective on how Korean grassroots or individual agents as a group elaborate on their social and political concerns as they are engaged with bringing about new social and economic order, i.e., a new structure, with some reference to the 2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution.

One of my key tasks in the book will be to describe and analyse the complexity of the (inter-)relationship between the structure(s), culture(s), and agents of the position-practice system of the topic under examination—the

19 Elaborated structure is concerned with “the production of common goods as relational goods” (Donati and Archer 2015: 198–228; Donati 2016: 55).

impeachment of President Park Geun-Hye and build the momentum to construct a new nation. In analysing data, an important task is to identify the components and emergent properties of structure, culture, and agency:

SEPs (structural emergent properties): “those internal and necessary relationships which entail material resources, whether physical or human, and which generate causal powers proper to the relations itself” ... “distributions of resources, roles, institutional structures, social systems” (Archer 1995: 177, cited in Horrocks 2009: 52).

CEPs (cultural emergent properties): These are properties of cultural system—“relations between the components of culture” (i.e., ideas/theories/values/beliefs)—and independent of the socio-cultural “relations between cultural agents” (Horrocks 2009: 51, 53). Ideational morphogenesis occurs through a process of socio-cultural interaction of diverse agents and actors who formulate ideas on the basis of the real or perceived transformative potential of the political unfolding due to the misconduct (Horrocks 2009: 50).

PEPs (people’s emergent properties): “the capacities of component members (affecting their consciousness and commitments, affinities and animosities) and exerted causal powers proper to their relations *vis-à-vis* other agents or groups” ... “distributions of resources, roles, institutional structures, social systems” (Archer 1995: 177, cited in Horrocks 2009: 54).

Why do the individual members engage in national affairs and social movements? What are the political, economic, and socio-cultural changes that the individual agents (i.e., agents and actors) desire? Reproduction (status-quo, morphostasis) or change (morphogenesis) results from what agents and actors do to the structure and the culture. The above-given Figure 2.1 is a description of the overall change occurring with reference to structure, culture, and agency. Paying specific attention to the agents, what are the ways in which individual agents go through the changes themselves and get involved in the morphogenetic sequence? In other words, how do diverse groups of individual agents become elaborated? Archer suggests ten steps of the morphogenetic cycle of Corporate and Primary agency (see Archer 1995: 264–265). As shown in Figure 2.1, there are three broad phases: (1) Socio-cultural conditioning of groups (phase T<sup>1</sup>); (2) Group interaction (phase T<sup>2</sup> to T<sup>3</sup>); and (3) Group elaboration (phase T<sup>4</sup>).<sup>20</sup>

20 It is not my intention to illustrate these phases in the empirical chapters, but to inform the readers of what is involved in the morphogenetic cycle of Corporate and Primary agency, which

The first phase includes the initial three steps. First, all agents are (dis)privileged with different levels of structural and cultural properties, which sort out Corporate Agents<sup>21</sup> from Primary Agents at the start of each cycle. Second, Corporate Agents challenge the given situation and start engaging in maintaining or remodelling the current socio-cultural system and its institutional operations, i.e., making changes whatever they could before full effects come about. Primary Agents continue their life within the socio-cultural system that Corporate Agents have maintained or remodelled. Some Primary Agents may or may not like the emerging directions of change. Third, all agents are diverse in terms of their level of prior interaction with other agents, and consequently, so diverse is the level of knowledge.

The second phase has a further four steps. Fourth, Corporate Agents' interaction alters the structural and cultural context of Primary Agents whose own dispositions and learning progressively modify the prior environment. Fifth, continuing interaction between Corporate and Primary Agents over time in pursuit of social change redefines them. Perhaps a good number of Primary Agents reject existing or "traditional" relations and/or beliefs and values. Sixth, Corporate and Primary Agents' actions, sometimes in conjunction with the media, pressure groups, or political figures, could bring about changes to the relevant local and/or national policies, which enable as well as restrain further actions to bring about social change. That is, access to some political or economic benefits or equality that were not obtainable by particular groups in society is now achieved or created such potential. Seventh, an increasing number of Primary Agents being aware of the state of the problems (e.g., inequality, exploitation, human rights) can take actions through minimalist reaction, disorganized co-action, or organized interaction, depending upon the given institutional context in which they are placed. A consequence is aggregate effects.

The third phase contains further three steps. Eighth, Corporate Agents' interaction generates emergent properties, thus, for example, Primary Agents produce aggregate effects. Ninth, Social Agency is elaborated societally and sectionally, which leads to a significant shrinkage of the group of Primary Agents, who "become incorporated or transformed into Corporate Agents, thus swelling this category" (Archer 1995: 265). Tenth, social change is achieved as "the resultant of aggregate effects produced by Primary Agents

will be part of personal emergent properties (PEPs) in each empirical chapter.

21 For example, knowledgeable social activists or university students engaging in student movements.

in conjunction with emergent properties generated by Corporate Agents and thus does not approximate to what anyone wants” (p. 265).

The above-mentioned three phases and ten steps do not occur in a linear fashion in an actual social movement; they are much more dynamic in an open system of society. For example, in the lead up to the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*, some steps of the first two phases might have been in progress for a while, involving Primary and Corporate Agents while it is also possible that other Primary and Corporate Agents took action at the start of the *Candlelight Revolution*—the third phase.

## Research Methods

In my research activities, I have always valued media representations as they effectively and uniquely capture the given structure, culture, and individual agency of a society at a particular time. What sort of data is acceptable to be the sources of social scientific analysis can be controversial even within a particular discipline. Media reportages and especially the audience perspectives which they have expressed may not be the same as the interview-based data in an artificial setting. All the settings are artificial including the views expressed on social media. However, what is useful is diversity, not the approaches to include one and exclude another. Therefore, any set of data should be used cautiously.

News reports and editorials represent how media interpret and react to the current and major issues in the given context (Le 2010). As the media is ubiquitous, it has become the vessel of information and the representations of what the media consumers including primary agents and corporate actors have in mind regarding a particular social phenomenon or social movement. Media platforms such as YouTube, internet news, and blogs often record many offline activities. The quality of these is as genuine as interview data and they make an important source of data for social scientific analysis (Bryman 2016: 558). Survey or interview data can be collected through the use of tools designed according to the researchers’ needs, and the interview data can be affected by social desirability. However, the data available through the internet are not free of bias or pollution one way or another but are independent of the researchers. The internet-based data and news representations also cover a broad range of demographics and geographical diversities. Some of the data such as the public speeches made at the social movements are primary data and others such as internet news are semi-primary or secondary. The semi-primary data are valuable

in their own right as they indicate the reporters' biases as well as social desirabilities. Indeed, media narratives offer the researchers extensive data for analysis and enable in-depth descriptions of emergent social structural, cultural, and agential properties to understand social phenomena (Han 2016b: 4–6; Bryman 2016).

Traditional surveys are not always adequate for the study of nationalism (Malešević 2018: 556). The survey methods tend to heavily rely upon relatively narrow and socio-historically “decontextualized, instant, snapshots of popular attitudes” (p. 556). A deeper level of analysis of structure and culture is necessary. As Malešević argues, “many more social indicators than the traditional surveys” are required (p. 556) and I will take into consideration socio-historical, economic, and political contexts. For example, what individual speakers at public rallies or news reportages express needs to be understood in the context.

Yves Deloye emphasizes the “invisible” features of nationalism. For example, national identity and nationalism may be hidden within “various, ambiguous lines, based on largely unconscious processes ... without easily identifiable actors” (Deloye 2013: 617–618; cited in Kaufmann 2017: 12). According to Deloye, living in an environment with nationalistic traditions and cultures, listening to music with national characteristics, and purchasing national brands of machines may be one's stronger indication of nationalism than attending nationally significant days of celebration (Kaufmann 2017: 12). These suggest that nationalism is embedded in the everyday lives of ordinary people in a nation-state, which partially justifies my search for Korean nationalism from how the grassroots express their views on the prospect of reunification, Park Geun-Hye regime's influence peddling, Japan's forcibly recruiting Korean labour during the Second World War, Abe's trade provocation against Korea, and employers' unfair treatment of workers.

I have applied the principles of grounded theory methodology to data analysis, undertaking open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding involves breaking down and analysing words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs and developing their properties and dimensions. The aim is to identify concepts, events, and incidents, which are then grouped to form a category(ies). A category is discovered when concepts are compared one against another and appear to be closely related to a similar phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Han 2000: 253). A rigour of analysis involves careful comparisons, looking for similarities and differences between incidents, events, and other instances of phenomena.

Axial coding involves making connections between major categories or between a category and its subcategories by examining the conditions and

context under which an event occurs and by examining the consequences of any relevant action and interaction. In practice, open coding and axial coding are often carried out alternatively and simultaneously. Selective coding involves the process of selecting the core category, i.e., the central phenomenon under investigation for each chapter and systematically linking or integrating it to other categories, which leads to an analytic version of the descriptive narrative of the central question under investigation (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Han 2000: 254). Given the large amount of data and analysis over a long period for this project, rather than in a concentrated period, NVivo has been particularly helpful for the purposes of a systematic analysis.

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# 3 The Movement to Redress the Japanese Military “Comfort Women”

## Grassroots’ Concerns and Responses Today

“우리 스스로가 역사를 잊어버리면, 이런 사실이 있었다는 것조차 없어질 수 있다.”

(If we forget history, this horrific incident could be wiped away),

Park Soo-Nam, Director of *Silence: The Rising Voice of “Comfort Women.”*

### Abstract

Chapter 3 analyses grassroots’ concerns about the Japanese military “comfort women,” who were forcibly recruited to military “comfort stations” during the Second World War. Gyeongsang-Namdo Province had the greatest number of victims of this type of forced labour. Citizens of Tongyeong and Geoje cities in Gyeongsang-Namdo Province developed a website to support the victims from the communities. The website represents the contemporary citizens’ nationalism and national identities with reference to the crimes committed by imperial Japan and the community’s efforts to seek redress. South Korea’s advanced economic status and increasing power in the international community make important elements in the efforts.

**Keywords:** Japanese military “comfort women,” forced labour, sexual slavery, “comfort station,” *Dagagagi* website

### Introduction

The legacies of Japanese colonialism have been lingering and deeply embedded in Korean society. How Korea can overcome the negative memories and impact, which is *real*, has been an important national mission. Forced



labour and sexual slavery have caused trauma and horror to the victims, supporters, and the nation. Between 1932 and 1945, the estimated number of sexual slavery victims reached around 200,000; these women were coercively recruited, and most of them have now died (Hicks 1995; Yoshimi 1993). Since 1992, 234 victims have been reported to the Korean government (Choi 2010: 3). Beyond this period, a large number of the pro-Japanese (친일) Koreans sustained the high status and wealth that they gained at the expense of fellow Koreans, which led them to form a wealthy and powerful group. This has been a national concern for decades and provided an impetus to redressing the pro-Japanese traitors (친일청산).<sup>1</sup> Apart from North Korea, Japan is the foreign nation-state with the shortest distance from Korea, but emotionally the farthest. Contrasting the Japanese condescending perception of the Korean peninsula since the 19th century, Koreans have considered Japan the competitor to fight against in terms of economy, technology, and sports. Korea-Japan Football Rivalry attracts the whole nation's emotional attachment to the games (Mangan, Park, and Ok 2018; Ok and Mangan 2018). The Korean media, in general, and the conservative ones in particular,<sup>2</sup> have reportedly underestimated Korea's achievement in most areas in comparison with Japan, making the psyche of Korean people overwhelmed with an inferiority complex for decades, largely based on flunkeyism.

However, the changes to Korean perceptions of Japan have been accumulative. This chapter examines contemporary Korean nationalism and identities concerning the Japanese military "comfort women" (Military Sexual Slavery by Japan), a term agreed by the victims in broader Asia. A particular focus is the socio-historical contexts that enabled Koreans to reformulate their attitudes towards the "comfort women" and undertake a closer examination of contemporary Korean views of the matter. Theoretically speaking, the national and structural context has been transformed and has engendered emergent cultural properties, in the process of which the agents have been enabled and have actively pursued the elaboration and re-elaboration of the changes to further structural and cultural changes.

Two major controversial matters are sitting at the heart of the difficulties in resolving the case of "comfort women" between contemporary Korea and Japan. One is about whether the girls were forcibly removed from their home,

1 민족문제연구소 (The Centre for Historical Truth and Justice). 2016. "친일파 청산'을 반대하는 10가지 '귀변'들" (The Center for Historical Truth and Justice, Ten Mad Reasons against Cleansing the Pro-Japanese). March 23, <https://www.minjok.or.kr/archives/54971>, accessed January 3, 2020.

2 *Chosun Ilbo* and *Donga Ilbo* are conservative and pro-Japanese from the time of the colonial period.

which consequently led them to the “comforting stations” in Manchuria, China, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pacific Islands, Japan, and Korea. The other is that the Japanese government and military admit that they were involved in operating the “comforting stations,” however, they argue that it was the managers and recruiters of the “comforting stations,” who directly engaged in illegal activities such as human trafficking (Seo 2016: 212–214). Questioning this enforcement has instigated much debate. In regard to the legality of the military “comfort women,” the “service” clearly breached not only the law within Japan but also the related international conventions that Japan joined at the time of the Second World War (Korean Women’s Development Institute 2016).

Unfortunately, the Japanese government’s intention to raise the legality was simply to avoid its responsibility and also dilute the central issue of the problem. The Japanese government is missing the point by raising the legality of it, rather than paying attention to the irreversible damage inflicted against the women (Seo 2016: 214). Kawata Humiko is a Japanese author and activist who has been sympathetic to the “comfort women” victims and wants to see the Japanese government’s sincere effort to restore the victims’ dignity. Kawata argues that the crux of the matter is not whether or not imperial Japan had a role in operating the “comforting stations,” but the assault was by force as the “comforting stations” were under the auspices of the Japanese government.<sup>3</sup>

The issue of “comfort women” is sensitive and complex, and the attempt to understand and redress it has considered racism, nationalism, human rights, masculinity, war, and colonialism. It cannot be reduced to one or two elements. However, the most tragic of all is how a deeply sovereign agent’s dignity has been violently trampled down. With the end of the Second World War, the “comfort women” were either murdered or abandoned in the war fields. Some remained there for different reasons and some returned to Korea. Many returnees could not return to their hometowns and stayed silent about their stories of victimhood. The victims lived with acquired diseases, psychological pains, and social prejudice. A list of important questions here is: Why did it take half a century for the victims to speak out? Why did the individual victims take so long before demanding apologies from Japan? From the viewpoints of contemporary Korean grassroots, what are their core concerns? My immediate assumption is about their sympathy towards

3 신동아 (*Shin Dong-a*). 2017. “가와타 후미코 일본전쟁 책임자료센터 공동대표” (Kawata Humiko, Co-Representative of Japan’s War Documents). May 15, <https://shindonga.donga.com/Print?cid=532646>, accessed January 9, 2020.

the victims and anger towards imperial Japan. It has been the grassroots movement to redress the “comfort women” since the 1990s that has kept the “comfort women” as a socio-historically important matter to resolve especially when the Japanese government denied its responsibility and reparation and when the Korean government downplayed it (Lee 2017: 80; Kim 2018b: 120; Son 2018). The movement was sustained by the Wednesday demonstrations in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, leading to the construction of the Statue of Peace (소녀상) and recording the history in textbooks (Chung 2013). This chapter discusses grassroots perspectives towards the phenomenon, the public perceptions of which have changed, influenced by the improvement of the national economy and the Korean nation-state’s international status.

## Literature Review

There have been four key strands of the scholarship on the Japanese military “comfort women” (Lee and Bae 2019). First, the victims’ life trajectories as portrayed in the memorial museum and through interviews (Kim 2010; Choi 2010; Son and Cho 2009). Second, media report frames social movements about the “comfort women” in Korea and/or Japan (Lee and Min 2011; Kim and Woo 2016). Third, memories and discourses as represented in documentaries, school texts, and the Statue of Peace (Jeong 2016; Kim 2018b). Fourth, reparation for the victims as it relates to diplomatic relations between Japan and Korea (Kim 2018a; Kwak 2006; Do 2008; Choi 2005).

First, the earlier research on the “comfort women” started with an attempt to describe the victims’ life journey, of which forced sexual slavery was the most painful incident. The exhibition of relevant incidents of the “comfort women” in the museum recreates the memories under the current context and distributes them widely. In this process, the memories are recontextualized at present, which may be influenced by the current socio-cultural context (Kim 2010: 179; Kim 2005). Kim E. (2010: 183–184) notes that the Independence Hall of Korea (독립기념관) is a particular outcome of political leaders’ implementation of top-down nationalism to stimulate bottom-up nationalism, which contributes to the political legitimacy. Kim E. (2010: 183–184) also contends that the Independence Hall needs to better represent “gender and class dimensions,” and the patriarchal view of gender and sex needs to be corrected, and that peaceful solidarity with the “comfort women” survivors of other countries needs to be displayed. Much attention is given to “observing the exhibition of past incidents *today*” to redress the

problematic practice of the past and present. This is in part what I will further explore by analysing the grassroots' views on the incident, including the views of the younger generation today.

Kim E. (2010: 181) was concerned with the non-existence or the limited exhibitions of the issues of the "comfort women," which restricts further research of the related exhibitions. The Women and War Museum (전쟁과 여성 인권박물관) was opened in 2012 and this led to further research (Chun 2018; Park 2014a; Kim et al. 2013). The research of the exhibitions necessarily links the past incident to contemporary Koreans. However, as the memories are recreated to remind *contemporary* Koreans, what are the ways in which the memories affect Korean nationalism in the 21st century, as opposed to the early 20th century?

Second, studies have examined media report frames of social movements about the "comfort women" in Korea and/or Japan (Lee and Min 2011; Kim and Woo 2016). Lee and Min (2011: 42), in their study of the media reportages on social movements about the "comfort women," attempt to overcome the limitations of the analysis of the media text, by taking into consideration the politico-historical contexts—employing "collective action frames" (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow 2007; both cited in Lee and Min 2011). The approach aims to reveal the level of seriousness, unfairness, and immorality of the social condition, ascertain who or what the origins of the problem are, and how to redress the problem (Snow and Benford 1992; cited in Lee and Min 2011: 43). In brief, the level of strength of a social movement and the media's effective report of it can influence the success of the movement (Gamson 2007; Cooper 2002; Lee and Min 2011: 46). These research findings reiterate that the issue of the "comfort women" is not only concerned with the victims, but it needs to be understood in the social, national, and international context.

Park (2014b) found that the Japanese newspapers' common framing in their reports on the "comfort women" is that private recruitment companies coerced the girls into sexual slavery, but denied the Japanese government's direct involvement in the coercion (Kim and Woo 2016: 85). The Japanese news has been particularly concerned that the Japanese diplomatic effort to have the issue of the "comfort women" resolved has unintendedly led to the impression that the Japanese government had a key role in causing all the inhumane conduct during the Second World War (Nam 2014). I argue that Japan's and the Japanese news' continuing denial of the historical incident has been in part due to the unequal power relations between Korea and Japan. There is a sign of change with this, which in part I explore in this chapter and the volume. Kim and Woo (2016: 112) find that Korean newspapers have a

primary focus on the origins of the problem and Japan's appropriate apologies and compensation, whereas Japanese newspapers are tired of lingering on the problem and want to move forward. Thus, the tension between the two nation-states over the problem continues. Again, the unequal power relations between the two seem to be an obstacle to the resolution.

Third, Jeong (2016) investigates the films and documentaries on the records and narratives of the "comfort women" victims produced since the 1990s, and the documentaries' impacts on public discourses on the topic. Jeong contends that because of the filmmakers' close rapport with the victims, the documentaries brought about a significant awareness and even led the public to demand an apology from the Japanese government (p. 160). The "*1987 June Struggle*" was also a turning point when the Korean public became much more aware of the gendered perspective of the "comfort women" (e.g., women's rights), raising awareness of the problems of patriarchy (Jeong 2016: 168; Jung 2013). I would add that the broader political and economic development of the Korean nation-state in the 1990s is another significant element which made those films impactful in terms of developing the public discourse and social movements on the topic.

Kim M. (2018b) examines the transformation of the historical incident into public trauma, then leading to the massive grassroots movement of the citizens and high-school students to protest against the Japanese government. The movement has been global in solidarity with the victims in other countries as well as advocates for women's rights. Kim M. (2018b) finds that the interactions between the victims and the public, the memory of the victims' narratives as represented on the Statue of Peace, and the formation of the public/social memories have resulted in the massive grassroots movement. Again, why have these movements taken place since the 1990s, and not before? I argue it is due to the emergent structural and cultural contexts nationally and internationally that enabled the movements and the expression of calculated nationalism.

Fourth, Kim C. (2018a: 231) notes it is the complexity of the "comfort women," which makes the resolution of the matter difficult. The problems around the "comfort women" at the time of, and later, the crime, encompasses Japanese imperialism, patriarchy and authoritarianism of Korean society, historical and diplomatic conflicts between Korea and Japan, and the breach of human rights of the women during the war. This is why it took over forty years before the Korean women publicly raised the matter for the first time for a resolution in the late 1980s. The 2015 Japan-South Korea "comfort women" Agreement was a hastily and ill-prepared agreement, in which the victims' needs and sufferings were not considered. The Agreement was to

reword the Kono Statement on August 4, 1993, which included, "The then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations" (p. 234). The activists' and victims' frustration with the slow progress for the resolution led to their appeal to the international community. In July 2007 the U.S. Congress adopted a resolution that the Japanese government restore the victims' dignity and human rights, and provide apologies and compensation. The Parliaments of the Netherlands, Canada, and the European Union followed the suit. The Japanese government continues to refuse to offer full apologies or legal reparation. The "comfort women" have now become a transnational mission to resolve in solidarity with the relevant transnational organizations to "protect the universal value of human dignity and human rights" (Doh 2008: 67). Elizabeth Son's (2018: 19, 21) work focuses on "the process of redress, of remedial actions" for the survivors by analysing their "actions of remembrance," emphasizing the victims' deep commitment toward women's rights in a transnational context.

Many research projects have so far been somewhat "past-oriented" or "static" in the sense that "why and what happened" needs to be better understood and also the studies have paid attention to how the "comfort women" are depicted in an exhibition, film, and textbooks. They are all interested in revealing Korean nationalism against Japan to some degree. Past studies of memorial museums, media reports of social movements on the topic as well as public memories of the topic have reflected the grassroots' concerns or their nationalistic sentiment over the issues to a significant degree. It is also fair to note that past studies represent academic concerns more than public awareness. There is an opportunity to build further on these past studies in terms of contemporary Korean perception of the issues of the "comfort women."

Yuki Tanaka (2002) demonstrates that Japan's racism and nationalism were intertwined symbolically in male soldiers' gang-rape during the Second World War (Damousi 2003: 1122). This is a form of exertion of nationalist superiority against the members of the subordinate nations—a typical example of *nouveau-riche* nationalism (Han 2016). How about the experiences of the victims and their fellow countrymen/women over a long period? These are not simply the topic of tensions between the victims and perpetrators, but involve domestic and international relations and contexts. These are the precise questions that Damousi raised:

Further consideration could have been given to considering shifts over time. It is indisputable that political and sexual domination are

interlinked; at what point, and under what circumstances, did these issues begin to be contested, challenged, brought into question? What impetus gave rise to these critiques? (Damousi 2003: 1123)

The response to these questions becomes complex when the nation-state of the victims has significantly gained its power and influence in the international community. A specific question that I raise in this chapter is what are the *contemporary* Korean people's responses to the Japanese soldiers' mass sexual crimes against Korean women during the Second World War? Such a question involves Korean nationalism in a shift in the context of the new international order, especially with reference to Korean people's perception of Japan.

In brief, a few remaining questions resulting from the identified shortcomings of current literature are as follows. (1) Under what circumstances have the victims and fellow Koreans been able to raise the concerns? That is, what have been the socio-historical contexts that have enabled contemporary Koreans to raise concerns over the "comfort women?" (2) What do contemporary Koreans make out of the Japanese military "comfort women," with reference to Korean nationalism and national identities? These questions are still relevant to contemporary Korea and Japan. Japan has never offered formal apologies to the "comfort women." Korean economic and political development in recent decades and also a heightened awareness of human rights have made a large proportion of Koreans aware of the sufferings that the victims experienced, as illustrated in numerous contemporary cultural artefacts such as films.

## Research Methods

The internet portals such as Daum.net and Naver.com host numerous online cafés, but they have a relatively small number of members ranging from five to seventy. For example, The Site to Remember the Military "Comfort Women" (일본군 "위안부" 기억의 터),<sup>4</sup> and To the Military "Comfort Women/Grandmas" ("위안부" 할머니들께).<sup>5</sup> The Korean Council for Justice and Remembrance for the Issues of Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (정의 기억연대 or 정의연)<sup>6</sup> is the leading and significant non-profit organization

4 <https://cafe.naver.com/peacememory>

5 [https://cafe.naver.com/lymbhj2?iframe\\_url=/ArticleList.nhn%3Fsearch.clubid=24177822%26search.menuid=17%26search.boardtype=L](https://cafe.naver.com/lymbhj2?iframe_url=/ArticleList.nhn%3Fsearch.clubid=24177822%26search.menuid=17%26search.boardtype=L)

6 <http://womenandwar.net/kr/>

at the national level to restore the dignity of the victims. Its website is rich and informative. The Council receives some limited funding from the Korean government and supportive citizens. The Council’s achievements are significant and many researchers have written about them. The question of these sites is about whether or not they represent the views of the grassroots.

Between 1992 and 2006, 234 “comfort women” survivors were registered with the Korean government. Of the 192 registered in 2001, 56.5 per cent of them were from Gyeongsang-do Province and 31 per cent from Gyeongsang-Namdo Province, in which Tongyeong and Geoje are two cities. These regional areas located at the bottom of the peninsula and close to Japan were some of the most severely affected. I have selected the *Tongyeong Geoje Citizens Community Website that Supports the Japanese Military “Comfort Women”* (일본군 “위안부” 할머니와 함께하는 통영거제시민모임, <http://dagagagi.org>) for analysis as I considered it to be one of the best and most significant to represent contemporary grassroots perspectives.<sup>7</sup> This group is well represented through its local media but has been given no scholarly attention despite its potential to represent grassroots nationalism in regional districts, in which social movements are less active. This community, *Dagagagi* (literally meaning, getting closer to the grandmas), was formed on August 15, 2002 to relieve the pain of the survivors and to have their dignity restored. At the time, there were four survivors in Tongyeong and two in Geojedo. All of them were in their 80s and the community provided them with welfare support such as birthday parties, picnics, human rights camps, and seeking redress from the Japanese government for the crimes and reparate for the damage. The website’s front page indicates the contents of the online community: introduction, names of the six local survivors, activities to restore their dignities, community bulletin to inform and share, resources, advocate/donation. The community bulletin had 280 posts as at May 18, 2020, including high-school students’ petition postcards to the members of the Japanese Diet (parliament) calling for Japan to compensate the victims. The victims also had a visit to Japan and delivered the students’ postcards. The bulletin’s first posting was written on October 15, 2010 and continued till June 24, 2019. I downloaded the contents of the whole website in February 2020 and continued until March 1, 2020. The amount of data reached single-spaced 360 pages in A4. The community website includes the postings from other regional and national associations concerned with

7 A similar website to support the “Comfort Women” victims in Gyeongsang-Bukdo Province is 정신대 할머니와 함께 하는 시민모임 (Daegu Citizens Forum for Halmeoni—Grandmas), <http://www.1945815.or.kr/>



the “comfort women” as well as from the local actors residing in Tongyeong and Geoje cities. The “external” postings reflect the thoughts of local actors and agents, so they are posted on the website. As a way of substantiating and triangulating the *Dagagagi* website, I have consulted academic literature, media, and relevant websites.<sup>8</sup> Most of the related official websites on the “comfort women” represent the viewpoints of governments, the learned, or researchers rather than the grassroots, although there is significant overlap amongst them. Thus, the website of *Dagagagi* is particularly meaningful and represents grassroots perspectives.

A descriptive and analytical analysis of data has been undertaken based on the principles of the grounded theory methodology, involving open-, axial-, and selective coding. Open coding is to analyse sentences and paragraphs, which leads to developing concepts and categories. Axial coding is to identify the connections between subcategories to larger categories and ascertain the links among major categories, the latter of which may have the structure and context of the society. Selective coding mainly deals with the main categories and how they are supported by subcategories (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990).

## A Morphogenetic Background of the Military Sexual Slavery by Japan

The 1965 film, *Sunset on the Sarbin River* (사르빈강에 노을이 진다, dir. by Jung Chang-Hwa), depicting the Second Sino-Japanese Warfield in the late 1930s, has a short segment of conversation between two Koreans in China: a Japanese military “comfort woman” and a “supposedly voluntary” student soldier. The soldier asks the woman how she ended up in China. The woman said, “I was misled on the way to be a nurse.” The soldier responded, “You must be confused yourself. Imperial Japan would not mislead you like that.” The woman replied, “Have you not been cheated by imperial Japan so far?” Professor Park Yu-Ha notes that the woman is precise to the point that the soldier might have felt that he was not forcibly recruited, but in

8 They include: Digital Museum, The Comfort Women Issue and the Asian Women's Fund (디지털 기념관 위안부 문제와 아시아 여성기금), <http://www.awf.or.jp/k3/oralhistory-00.html>; Ministry of Gender Equality and Family: e-Museum of the Victims of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery (여성가족부 일본군 “위안부” 피해자 e-역사관), <http://www.hermuseum.go.kr/>; Northeast Asian History Foundation (동북아역사재단), <https://www.nahf.or.kr/main.do>; Research Centre for the Japanese Military “Comfort Women” Issue (일본군 “위안부” 문제 연구소), <http://www.kyeol.kr/>.

fact, he was indeed under the given *structure* of imperial Japan at that time despite his lack of knowledge about it.<sup>9</sup> The social climate in the 1960s was that the majority of Koreans were preoccupied with meeting their basic needs for everyday life, distancing themselves from anything beyond, such as human dignity. The Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea, signed on June 22, 1965, was an attempt to make up the relationships between the two nations in tension resulting from Japanese colonialism. However, President Park Chung-Hee's primary interest was financing from Japan to rebuild the national economy (Hicks 1995), which was a way to legitimize his leadership acquired through a military *coup d'état*. They paid little attention to the victims of the forced labour who suffered during Japanese colonialism.

Professor Yun Jeong-Ok, during her youth, saw some of her friends being taken away to be the Japanese military "comfort women." Yun published her research findings on the "comfort women" over four reportages in *Hankyoreh Shinmun* in January 1990 (Yoon 2015: 124).<sup>10</sup> These reportages came as a humiliating shock and erupted a wave of anger in the Korean nation-state. Ms. Kim Hak-Sun first spoke about her victim history and accused the Japanese government on August 14, 1991, following the Japanese government's denial of the war crime (Choi 2010: 18). These open reports and accusations waited for forty-five years after the National Independence in 1945. I argue that there were some emergent *structural* and *cultural* factors in operation that conditioned the given contexts, which discouraged the victims to speak out.<sup>11</sup> First, Japan's cooperation with, and technological support for, the Korean industries, was a stimulus for the continuing economic development of South Korea. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, Sex Tours (기생관광) were an important source of foreign monies. Kang Jun-Man reported that there were 100,000 Japanese tourists to Korea in 1971 and the number increased to 650,000 in 1979, 85 per cent of which were men (Kang 2017; Lie 1995; Bishop and Robinson 1998; Norma 2019). One could argue that this was a new version of the "comfort women" in operation although its features are not totally comparable.

Second, it was in the authoritarian Korean governments' interests to keep up with the industrialization and modernization of the nation, which

9 "제국의 위안부 2" (The 'Comfort Women' under Imperial Japan 2). June 5, 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwEWxaA2o\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwEWxaA2o_Y), accessed January 7, 2020.

10 The report was entitled, "정신대 원혼의 발자취" (In Search of the Origins of the Forced Labour).

11 The "comfort women" victims in China could not "come out" for the related structural reasons.

also provided an important element to legitimize the military dictatorial leadership (Yoon 2015: 214; Choi 2010: 13; cf., Han and Sharp 1997). The government and patriarchal Korean society avoided dealing with the issue (Lee and Min 2011: 46), and there was no social momentum to raise it. However, in the early 1990s, the Korean government became proactively supportive of the victims, providing housing and medical needs.<sup>12</sup> In 1997–1998 the government requested that the Japanese prime minister send an official letter of apology to the individual victims (Choi 2005: 21). These changes in national policies led to further changes in the social milieu, in that the victims were given the channel to share their victimhood narratives and the public elevated the individual trajectories into the public and national discourses (Choi 2010: 21–22; Kim 2000). According to Lee and Min (2011: 50), before 2000, the newsletters of The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (정대협)<sup>13</sup> described that the “comfort women” were the people of *a colony* of the Japanese imperialism and they were the rape victims of the imperial soldiers. That is, a primary focus before the 2000s was on the helpless nation-state of Korea as the chief cause of the misfortune of the victims—bashing the victim nation-state. Since then, the interpretation of the “comfort women” has been extended to consider feminism, the Korean government’s inability to resolve the matter with the recalcitrant perpetrator, Japan, and the U.S.’s indifference and unequal relations in the broader world system (Lee and Min 2011: 52–53). The movement to restore the victims’ dignities has become international, reaching out to national assemblies in some foreign countries. For instance, there was the U.S. House of Representatives’ resolution that Japan formally apologize and accept responsibility. In April 2008, other countries followed suit in demanding an apology, such as France, the Netherlands, North Korea, China, and the Philippines, despite Japan’s continuing refusal (Choi 2010: 22).<sup>14</sup>

Third, during the Japanese colonial period, women’s rights enjoyed some degree of nationalist support, e.g., advocating for the abolition of the Confucian legacy which looks down on women (Kim 1996). However, in the 1980s, Korea was going through rapid westernization and there were mixed views about feminism especially from the viewpoints of elites. It appears that as

12 Each received \$21,000 from the Korean government and \$4,344 from a civilian fund (Min 2003: 946).

13 한국정신대문제대책협의회.

14 *The Guardian*, “Japan Rejects US Calls for Apology over ‘Comfort Women.’” July 31, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jul/31/usa.japan>, accessed April 16, 2020.

far as grassroots were concerned their significant expression of women's rights was relatively limited. Korean society was much more conservative in the 1970s and 1980s than it is now, and it was not conducive enough for the victims to speak about what they had gone through. "Speaking out" or confessing the experiences would have only caused victim-blaming. For example, a "comfort woman" victim, Ms. Kim Hak-Sun's husband ridiculed her in front of their son about her life trajectory (Yoon 2015: 92; Kim 2010: 189). Importantly, the individual agents, who were clearly able to "calculate" what was most gainful, would naturally be reluctant to speak out in the given cultural context. Thus, calculated nationalism was in operation. According to a survey, following the Independence in 1945, four out of six victims returned to Korea but chose not to return to their hometown (Yoon 2015: 89–92). Some had to leave their hometowns due to the shame put on them or the community's accusation of them, reflective of the socio-cultural context. Returning from gender oppression in the brutal "comforting station" under the Japanese military government, Korea's patriarchal ideology prolonged the victims' suffering (Min 2003: 948). Fourth, the Japanese military "comfort women" turned up as a topic of scholarly attention in 2007, and an in-depth and broader academic debate commenced in 2013 (e.g., Park 2013; Yoon 2013).

Since the 2000s, the Korean economy has significantly grown and South Korea has emerged as a notable middle-power in the international community. This structural change of Korean society enabled the government provision of financial support for the "comfort women" and the active social movements to have restored the dignity of these women. This was under the cultural climate of an increasing institutionalization of women's rights especially from 1997 to 2007 (Kim and Kim 2011). The social actors became aware of the contextual change and have demanded that the Korean and Japanese governments work separately, as well as collaboratively, for a resolution. The Japanese government has been non-responsive.

## Findings

Margaret Archer's (1995) critical realist approach to the understanding of social change and social movement analyses the intersections between structure, culture, and agency. The *structural* properties reflect unequal relationships, e.g., the relation between a company owner and her employees or the relation between imperial Japan and the annexed Chosun. The level of unequal relationship is not static but fluctuates, and influences the characteristics of the emergent *cultural* properties. Then, the actors mobilize

the ideas and bring about change to, or reproduce, structure or culture, i.e., bring about change to the society or maintain the status quo.

Let me briefly illustrate the broader interactions between structure, culture, and agency to bring about changes regarding the “comfort women.” The 2015 Korea-Japan agreement on the Japanese military “comfort women” was an attempt to facilitate the diplomatic *structure* and relationship without any effort to acknowledge or resolve the legacy of the “comfort women.” This was in part for the sake of economic benefit at the expense of the victims’ rights. The year 2015 happened to be the time for “reboot feminism” and there was a clear social milieu or a *culture* not to persevere with any kind of sexual harassment (Lee 2017: 89). Further, the Statue of Peace brought out a large number of citizens to the grassroots protests all around the regions of South Korea against the Japanese government. The erection of over one hundred statues all over Korea particularly encouraged high-school boys and girls to participate in the grassroots movement—igniting the changes of the *primary agents to social actors*. “The Statue of Peace,” involving grassroots’ participation and financial donations as well as artistic work, was much more influential than the commemorative statues erected by the government (Kim 2018b: 127–128, 136).

### Structural Emergent Properties

*The Power Imbalance between Chosun Korea and Imperial Japan:*

*Revisiting the Past to Discuss the Present*

*The 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea* was the Japanese imperial admission of its past misconduct to Korea on the one hand, and an attempt to erase the misconduct on the other hand.<sup>15</sup> Overcoming the destruction and the loss of life through Japanese imperialism and the Korean War, the bruised Korean nation-state and its leaders occupied a subordinate position to Japan. The victims, like the Japanese military “comfort women,” were not given space to complain or ask for any compensation. As argued earlier, the trajectory of the social movement to restore the victims’ dignities indicates that they considered their misfortunes as part of their sorrows because they were the people of the impoverished nation-state in the past, but that they anticipated seeing their better off nation-state offer its people what is commensurate with the wealth and power of the nation (The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan 2004: 8). Thus, the victims’ reproach against the

15 평화를 만드는 여성회등 (Peace Making Women’s Association, etc.), August 26, 2005, cited in *Dagagagi*, August 29, 2005.

nation-state was kept silent for as long as possible, but has been expressed publicly in recent decades (The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan 1996: Ch.2).<sup>16</sup> It took half a century for Korean victims and their fellow countrymen/women to speak out and this is the time taken for Korea to bring up its political and economic development to a stage strong enough to enable the victims to speak out. That is, structural emergent properties grew influential enough to bring about emergent cultural properties, which in turn enabled primary and corporate agents to take social actions. Why it took half a century for the victims to speak out is clear based on the critical realist method of retrodution. Moreover, the method of abduction illustrates how the victims and primary/corporate agents in affluent South Korea speak out and demand apologies from the Japanese government. This is an important task of this chapter.

The community website (i.e., *Dagagagi*) under analysis contains informative knowledge and is full of passion to restore the dignities of the women and the nation. The forced sexual slavery took place in the *past*, and was an epitome of Japan's "barbaric rule and a crime against humanities, based on violence, oppression, and the survival of the fittest." Referring to the *past* crime is inevitable as part of the contemporary movement to redress the effect of the crime. Indeed, Japanese imperialism was full of "national oppression and discrimination, political oppression, economic exploitation, and obliteration of every human right."<sup>17</sup> Any kind of Korean movement to gain national Independence or any resistance movement accompanied by minor criticisms faced unrelenting violence and horrific control. Deceptive assimilation policies were pursued to erase Korean identities, and the Japan-led Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) and the Pacific War (1941–1945) drew all the available material and human resources from Korea to the Warfield, leaving the Korean peninsula devastated. The Japanese military "comfort women" were part of the forced human resources (Min 2003: 945).<sup>18</sup>

Once the *past* crime is raised today it has become a *present* issue that necessarily requires the consideration of the past and present structures of

16 *Hankook Ilbo*. 2020. "최봉태 변호사, 이용수 할머니의 분노, 위안부 청구권에 소홀한 정부 탓" (Grandma Lee Yong-Su's Anger about the Government's Timid Approach to Seeking the Compensation). <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/202005121297320429>. May 12, accessed May 15, 2020.

17 진실과미래, 국치 100년사업공동추진위원회 (Truth and Future Commission to Remember the Loss of Sovereignty), April 24, 2009, cited in "일본군 '위안부' 할머니와 함께하는 통영거제시민모임." <http://dagagagi.org/>, April 24, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

18 진실과미래, 국치 100년사업공동추진위원회 (Truth and Future Commission to Remember the Loss of Sovereignty), April 24, 2020, cited in *Dagagagi*, April 24, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

Korea and Japan, and their political and economic relations. Contemporary Koreans'—i.e., primary and corporate agents'—identifying the “women’s violated human rights” as their own makes the crime “the present problem there and now.”<sup>19</sup> Structural emergent properties have been the underpinning factor that has enabled the agents’ properties to stand against past wrongdoings. That is, as soon as the Korean economy has strengthened enough and Korea has more to say in the international economy, the problem of the past is not simply a problem of the past, but the present. Korean civilians and scholars have made sincere efforts to have the dignities of the “comfort women” restored since the 1990s when the victims first spoke out, and there has been significant progress. However, the Japanese government offers no official apologies for their imperial invasion of Korea, and Japan has even justified the past history and their invasive war, which has exacerbated the tension between Korea and Japan.<sup>20</sup> Japan’s continuing distortion of history is still a stumbling block in developing any harmonious relationship between the two nations.<sup>21</sup>

Japan has been indifferent to the fact that the core of the resolution of the “comfort women” is about Japan’s revelation of the full details of imperial Japan’s planning and operation of the military “comfort women,” apologies, legal reparation, and the prevention plan of the same in the future.<sup>22</sup> In brief, being aware of the emergent structural properties of Korea and Japan, and their relationship, the social actors and victims demanded that the dignities of the “comfort women” be restored.<sup>23</sup> Yet, Japan in particular is reluctant to accept the new reality of the emergent structural properties.

*Japan is Reluctant to Apologize, Accept a New Structure and Relationship*

The Japanese governments have argued for the ownership of Dokdo Island and have continued to pay tribute to the war criminals at the Yasukuni Shrine which has memorialized thousands of innocent victims of East Asia. The

19 “일본군 ‘위안부’ 할머니와 함께하는 통영거제시민모임.” <http://dagagagi.org/>, July 20, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

20 “일본군 ‘위안부’ 할머니와 함께하는 통영거제시민모임.” April 25, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

21 Japan has a long record of distorting history regarding its imperialism. Based on Lee Min-Jin’s historical fiction novel *Pachinko* (2017, Grand Central Publishing), the American produced series, *Pachinko*, is internationally popular in early 2022 and ironically educating the world how imperial Japan inhumanely treated Koreans in Japan and also how Koreans courageously fought against the brutality.

22 평화를 만드는 여성회등 (Peace Making Women’s Association, etc.), January 3, 2006, cited in *Dagagagi*, April 24, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

23 *Dagagagi*, August 31, 2011, accessed May 17, 2020.

dangerous imperial mindset is still in operation in the minds of the present politicians in Japan.<sup>24</sup> There is an active rejection of a new structure and relationship. Japan's continuing exertion of power towards victimized nations, causing the prevalent power imbalance, is the obstacle to having the past crime resolved and having the women's dignities restored. The social actors in support of the victims are well aware of the economic disparity between Japan and many Asian countries which also suffered under Japanese imperialism. The actors argue that all the affected Asian nations must actively demand that the Japanese government attend to the resolution of the military "comfort women," illustrating what happened in Europe after the Second World War. The nations around Germany actively searched for the Nazi war criminals and brought them to justice. However, the Asian nations with war victims have actively avoided even reporting the war criminals. Especially, the issue of the Japanese military "comfort women" has been a taboo not to raise in their own nation-states. Unfortunately, this has been an impetus for Japan to smother the war crime and ignore its legal responsibilities. In fact, Japan is trying hard to regain the superior military and imperial power that it had in the past, which is a potential threat to world peace.<sup>25</sup> Korean activists/actors have commanded that the well-off Japan apologize, legislate, and reparate in regard to the military "comfort women." In a mass-petition-writing-campaign to Japan, high-schooler Kim Bo-Yun writes to a member of the Japanese Diet that "it is not only the economy which represents a nation-state but also its capacity to acknowledge and rectify the mistake."<sup>26</sup> I contend that such a writing campaign has been in part enabled by the growing economic status of Korea and the nation's international influence, which have engaged even the youth. Although Korean social actors are working in solidarity with the victims in other Asian nations, those nations with lesser economic achievement have not been as active as Korea. In fact, even the Korean governments have been treading carefully in their dealing with Japan, not proactively representing the interests of the "comfort women" victims.

The Korean government should not be an onlooker, turning a blind eye to the victims who have been rancorous throughout their lives and now

24 진실과미래, 국치 100년사업공동추진위원회 (Truth and Future Commission to Remember the Loss of Sovereignty), April 24, 2020, cited in *Dagagagi*, April 24, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

25 2006년 3월 15일 세계 각국에서 일본군 "위안부" 문제 해결을 위한 700차 수요시위에 참가하고 연대하는 단체와 시민들 (Activists and Civilians from around the World, Participating in the 700th Wednesday Meeting), March 15, 2006, cited in *Dagagagi*, March 17, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

26 *Dagagagi*, October 31, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.



dying. This new year, 2006, the government should set the “comfort women” as the key diplomatic concern and pursue aggressively the solution to the problem.<sup>27</sup>

The Korean government totally ignores the victims’ sorrowful screams, and does not protect its own people. Pragmatic diplomacy disregards the victims’ human rights and dignities and invites shame from the international community.<sup>28</sup>

The Korean government’s inactive pursuit of the resolution is partially due to the victims’ poor family backgrounds with limited politico-economic influence (Min 2003). Watching President Roh Moo-Hyun’s making no progress in his summit with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in July 2004, the “comfort women” victims cried out to Roh, “Are you president of Koreans or Japanese?” The social actors argued that “the crushed human rights were run over again, and that the victims were put to death again.”<sup>29</sup> The actors’ and victims’ disappointments continued recurrently not only because the Korean government lacked the will for the resolution, but also because the Japanese government has not given priority to it.<sup>30</sup> The local social actors in Tongyeong and Geoje cities were dismayed at the Korean National Assembly’s not even deliberating the legislation to resolve the matter in conjunction with Japan.<sup>31</sup> The local actors and the members of the Geoje City Council were particularly anxious as more victims were dying.<sup>32</sup> The local activists maintain close links with the local “comfort women” victims, crying out for a resolution to the Korean and Japanese governments, but their demands fall on the deaf ears.<sup>33</sup>

27 평화를 만드는 여성회등 (Peace Making Women’s Association, etc.), cited in *Dagagagi*, January 3, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

28 Song Do-Ja in *Dagagagi*, October 30, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

29 한국정신대문제대책협의회(or 정대협) (The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan), cited in *Dagagagi*, July 23, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

30 평화를 만드는 여성회등 (Peace Making Women’s Association, etc.), cited in *Dagagagi*, January 3, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.; The 125 Victims of the “Comfort Women,” 정대협, and the Concerned Civilians at the 700th Wednesday Meeting, March 15, 2006, cited in *Dagagagi*, March 17, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

31 Song Do-Ja in *Dagagagi*, January 7, 2008, accessed May 17, 2020. This is complicated by a significant number of the members of the Korean National Assembly who oppose a stance against Japan. However, my primary focus here is an analysis of the contents of the website.

32 *Dagagagi*, November 2 and December 24, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020; 거제인터넷신문. 2009. “일본군 ‘위안부’문제해결 촉구결의안 채택 (Passing the Resolution for the Japanese Military ‘Comfort Women’ Issue).” December 25, <http://www.gjn.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=3316>, accessed July 10, 2020.

33 *Dagagagi*, December 24, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

*Japan Should Legislate and Establish a Set of New Standards, Starting with Apologies*

Tongyeong and Geoje cities are relatively near Japan. The civilians and actors of *Dagagagi* have close interactions with the local "comfort women" victims and have hosted the campaigns to write letters to the Japanese National Diet (parliament). Again, these campaigns presuppose the improved power, status, and structure of the Korean nation-state in the international community. However, Japan has ignored the Korean request that Japan legislate and reparate to have the victims' dignities restored. Unless Japan accepts the new reality and relationships and is able to realize potential benefits from a new relationship, Japan may not be forthcoming with the resolution.

Ji Yejin, a senior high-school student, has an earnest plea to the Japanese National Diet. Ji said that she has kept in touch with the "comfort women" victims and is deeply concerned with the sufferings and sorrows that they have been through. Ji cannot help weeping when thinking of the "grandmas" who were taken overseas for sexual slavery when they were Ji's age. She went on to say:

I do not hate Japanese. It's wrong to hate contemporary Japanese because of what their forefathers did. However, it is wrong to deny and cover-up past mistakes. What would you think if your daughter were taken away overseas and worked as forced sexual slavery? That is exactly what happened to the military "comfort women" and that is the feeling we suffer as the descendants of the "grandmas." Revenge or money is not at the centre of the grandmas' protests, but sincere apologies from the bottom of the heart. Historical facts can't be erased. ... Please, the Japanese National Diet, have the issue resolved, so that the grandmas can forgive you and can "go to sleep" in peace.<sup>34</sup>

The Japanese government has not come to the table to have a meaningful discussion and resolution of the issue of the military "comfort women." However, from the viewpoint of Korea, its social actors want past misconduct rectified and are persistently demanding apologies and reparation for the victims. These represent the cultural emergent properties.

**Cultural Emergent Properties: Projection of the Prevalent Ideas**

The Korean government has provided the victims with the costs of living and healthcare, which they gratefully received. However, the injured dignities,

34 *Dagagagi*, October 15, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

which are non-material, can be restored from apologies and forgiveness, which are yet to occur. There have been ongoing cultural activities aiming to re-establish the importance of the ideas and values to promote human rights and peace, reflecting the economic and cultural changes nationally and internationally. Further, along with the economic development, women's rights have led to the establishment of a relevant government sector since the 1980s and the formation of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in 2005. International feminist movements such as the so-called third-wave feminism in the early 1990s were part of the broader background and a source for providing an impetus for cultural values.

### *The Ideas and Values That Promote Peace and Non-Violence*

With the development of new structures and relationships, prevalent ideas, values, and relevant cultural activities have been reformed and settled as consequences. These cultural activities are also backed by a series of agents' protests. Also, nationally and globally, in regard to the broader cultural milieu, the value of human rights is much more strictly observed than it was decades ago. At the crux of the protests is the hope that the sacrifice of the "comfort women" is not to be forgotten in history, and there will be no repetition of it against the future generations.<sup>35</sup> In addition to the structural changes discussed earlier, it is this cultural context with new properties encouraging to the victims who could not help stand against the Japanese government which attempts to hide their violent misconduct, expresses no apologies, and rather prepares itself to be able to ignite another war.<sup>36</sup> Japan is active in distorting the history book on their past invasion and igniting the wars and engages in cleansing those misdeeds by paying tribute to the Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>37</sup> This represents Japan's persistent refusal to accept the new cultural emergent properties in place today.

Along with the social movements focused on derailed justice and human rights, there are the so-called pro-Japanese traitors (or 친일파), or the Korean standpattists, who staunchly disagree with the social actors. The standpattists argue that the Korean modernization is attributed to Japanese colonialism and the military "comfort women" were not forced but volunteered (Lee 2019). I argue those standpattists' thoughts are outdated

35 *Dagagagi*, October 28, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

36 The "Comfort Women" Victims at the 700th Wednesday Demonstration, March 15, 2006, cited in *Dagagagi*, March 17, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

37 진실과미래, 국치 100년사업공동추진위원회 (Truth and Future Commission to Remember the Loss of Sovereignty), February 26, 2009, cited in *Dagagagi*, April 24, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

and they refuse to observe the emergent cultural properties in the new era (Lee 2019). Also, importantly, Korean society has not been able to fully reconcile with the Japanese imperialism, e.g., holding the pro-Japanese Koreans accountable for their ill-informed or treacherous behaviours against their fellow Koreans during the colonial period, followed by their continuing benefits. A good portion of them has formed part of the dominant group of contemporary South Korea.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, the continuing tension between the majority of Koreans and the pro-Japanese (by birth or post-birth) has been extremely destructive and wasteful. This means that a rejection of, and an inability to embrace a new culture, new values, and a new structure, is a continuing problem within Korean society.<sup>39</sup>

Those Koreans who learn about the Japanese treatment of Koreans during the colonial period are determined that the abused human rights, through the "comforting stations," have to be restored and that the world of justice and peace has to be rebuilt through Japanese apologies and reparation.<sup>40</sup> The social actors and the victims are distressed when they learn about the wars continuing around the world. The most vulnerable in war are women and children. They desire that no one deserves the sorrows and injuries that the Japanese military "comfort women" experienced.<sup>41</sup> A new culture to appreciate the dignity of human rights has arrived irrespective of whether one is prepared to accept it or not. This certainly persuades the social actors to say that the victims' injuries must not be repeated ever, and they continue their protests against the Japanese government.<sup>42</sup> Under the new culture, Junichiro Koizumi, former Japanese Prime Minister (2001–2006), once wrote to the victims, "As Prime Minister of Japan, I thus extend anew my most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as 'comfort women.'"<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, the victims see this as no more than lip service. What they want is "truthful apologies representing the Japanese government rather than an individual, and other

38 The examples are Park Chung-Hee, General Baek Sun-Yeop.

39 진실과미래, 국치 100년사업공동추진위원회 (Truth and Future Commission to Remember the Loss of Sovereignty), February 26, 2020, cited in *Dagagagi*, April 24, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

40 *Dagagagi*, March 17, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

41 The "Comfort Women" Victims at the 700th Wednesday Demonstration, March 15, 2006, cited in *Dagagagi*, March 17, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

42 *Dagagagi*, October 15, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

43 VAWW-NET Japan, July 2004, cited in *Dagagagi*, August 9, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2001, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/pmletter.html>, accessed July 14, 2020.

actions to reflect their sincerity, such as apologies, reparation, investigating the truth, education and historical awareness.<sup>44</sup> Importantly, these notes are written by “Violence Against Women in War-Network, Japan,” a Japanese activist group.

*The Cultural Platforms to Publicize the Ideas through Film, Play, and Exhibition*

The films, plays, and exhibitions have become relatively new and prevalent platforms for demonstrating emergent cultures and communicating them to the public. These platforms are part of the contemporary cultural activities dealing with past events, which are of present concern. These activities offer the public historical and cultural reflections. They are also designed to pave a way for the resolution of the issue of the military “comfort women,” and particularly for a peaceful world. On November 24 and 25, 2007, Tongyeong International Music Foundation Concert Hall hosted a human rights film festival, screening some of the most successful and popular documentaries on the topic of the “comfort women” and the legacy of Japanese imperialism. They included *The Murmuring: A History of Korean Women* (낮은 목소리, 1995), *Goodbye* (안녕, 사요나라, 2005), *Our School* (우리학교, 2006), *The Sorrow Yet to be Healed* (아직도 아물지 않는 상처들, 2003), *History that Can't be Erased: The Japanese Military “Comfort Women”* (지울수 없는 역사: 일본군 위안부, 2005).<sup>45</sup>

*The Murmuring*, a documentary film, depicted the lives of six victims in their shared house, concerning their past experiences in a “comforting station,” and witnessing their painful memories in many protesting rallies, such as the Wednesday meetings in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. Another film, *Goodbye*, is meant to see off the unfortunate past and welcome a peaceful future. Many victims of the Second World War were “forcibly” memorialized at the Yasukuni Shrine, without the victims’ consent, which dishonours them. The documentary narrates the story of a descendant of a Korean victim as she fights to have her ancestor’s memorialization removed from the Yasukuni Shrine, and also a Japanese activist’s struggle to fight for the Japanese government’s reparation for injustice against the “comfort women.” The sorrows do not end with the victims but continue with their descendants; however, they are concealed. There are also many Japanese who are seeking justice as a universal value.

44 VAWW-NET Japan, July 2004, cited in *Dagagagi*, August 9, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

45 *Dagagagi*, November 15, 2007, accessed May 17, 2020.

Chosun School in the documentary film, *Our School* (우리학교) was established by the first-generation Koreans in Japan—the only such school in the whole Hokkaido. Despite their upbringing in Japan, the students (and their parents) choose to study in the Chosun School for the sake of maintaining their Korean identity in Japan which remains particularly hostile against Koreans.

The ticket for each of these documentary films costs \$13 for adults and \$5 for students. There were also exhibitions of the artwork painted by the “comfort women.” *Dagagagi*, the community movement organization, hosted a film festival (with eight films different from the ones screened in the 2007 film festival) and a photo exhibition on the theme of the “comfort women” at the Tongyeong Marine Tour Park on August 23 and 24, 2008.<sup>46</sup> This human rights film festival hosted in 2008 was the sixth as such in the Geoje-Tongyeong community.

The human rights film festival is extraordinary in the sense that the contents on display are about the deep injuries that cannot be easily healed and that destroyed the lives of many. The festival is an expression of hope for a future without violence. All the funds raised through the festival were used to support the wellbeing of the “victim grandmas.”<sup>47</sup> The films and artwork, as cultural mediums, attracted a broad range of audiences and had a significant effect on spreading and realizing the value of human rights and peace.<sup>48</sup> The community members, agents, and social actors hosting the human rights film festival were determined that the Japanese government’s formal apologies and reparation will repair the distorted history and heal the victims’ injuries.<sup>49</sup> It must be a significant struggle for the local agents and actors to see the victims carry the vestiges of the sexual abuses in the community. However, it is seen that the ways to support them to overcome the pain and open a peaceful world for the next generation are through cultural activities to inform the community members and especially young students.<sup>50</sup>

*Dagagagi*’s annual “Peace and Human Rights Cultural Festival”<sup>51</sup> is a continuing reminder of the values of national sovereignty, independence, human rights, and human life, as conveyed on the website. According to Song Do-Ja, a social actor,

46 *Dagagagi*, August 10, 2008, accessed May 17, 2020.

47 *Dagagagi*, November 15, 2007, accessed May 17, 2020.

48 *Dagagagi*, August 10, 2008, accessed May 17, 2020.

49 *Dagagagi*, August 10, 2008, accessed May 17, 2020.

50 *Dagagagi*, August 10, 2008, accessed May 17, 2020.

51 “일본군 위안부 피해자기금마련 평화인권문화제.”

Koreans, hoping the national Independence from Japanese imperialism in 1945, would remove all the pains resulting from the Japanese oppression for 36 years. However, national Independence was not an outcome of Koreans' blood and tears. In the 65 years after the Independence, deeply remaining are the girls' blooded tears due to the sexual slavery, the forced coal-miners' moaning to death, the boys' screaming to death at the front of the warfields, the Koreans' sorrow under the Japanese systematic discrimination, and those suffering from the inherited diseases caused from the atom bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>52</sup>

However, Song Do-Ja believes that the national movement, of which *Dagagagi* is one, will eventually ensure the recovery of justice, human rights, democracy, and peace, and that we will be able to see the girls' and the grandmas' smiling.<sup>53</sup> The girls may refer to the girls suffering in the "comforting station" and the girls in the peaceful future, and the grandmas to the "comfort women" victims waiting for the apologies and reparation.

The first Wednesday Demonstration (수요시위/집회) in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul took place on January 8, 1992, as Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi was about to visit Korea. The demonstration, which was in solidarity with the movements in regional Korea, still takes place every Wednesday, marking the 1,534th on March 11, 2022. The Wednesday Demonstration has become an internationally unique and long-running movement for human rights and peace. The demonstration is a *cultural* event to educate future generations. It is a *cultural* event in the sense that, despite the level of pain due to the human rights abuse through sexual slavery being enduringly high, the victims and contemporary Koreans want to express their concerns clearly and peacefully through cultural activities. For example, Lee Tae-Hee, a university student, notes that "I have learned what peace and human rights are through the voices of the grandmas such as Kim Bok-Dong, Gil Won-Ok, and Lee Yong-Su, for the last five years and right on this venue."<sup>54</sup> The values they advocate are so crucial and fundamental that thousands of protesters have joined and shouted for justice and peace for thirty years without skipping one week. The protesters' passion continues to grow stronger despite their requests falling on deaf ears. Every demonstration

52 *Dagagagi*, July 28, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

53 *Dagagagi*, July 28, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

54 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2020. "[사설] 수요시위, '초심' 기억하며 앞으로 나가야 한다" (Editorial: Wednesday Protests Must Continue Bearing in Mind the Original Intentions). May 13, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/opinion/editorial/944822.html>, accessed July 21, 2020.

has been a struggle for the old, sick, and suffering victims in particular. The protesters' cries and messages for peace are directed toward the Japanese Embassy, the Japanese government, and all the war criminals.<sup>55</sup> There have been no meaningful responses from Japan. For instance, Okuno Seiske, a member of the Japanese Diet, argued that the "comfort women" were not forced, but were voluntary and that the Japanese military provided them with transport to the "comforting stations"; this has consequently led to distortions in history texts in Japan.<sup>56</sup> A Japanese gynaecologist working in the Japanese army examined 100 women and found that twenty of them were Japanese prostitutes and eighty of them were "Korean virgins." Those Korean women were told they were going to work in factories.<sup>57</sup>

Tongyeong-Geoje cities co-hosted the 1,000th Wednesday Demonstration in the community in solidarity with many other protests throughout the country. On December 8, 2011, thousands of members of Tongyeong-Geoje cities gathered at the Gangguan Beach where the victims (soon to be "comfort women") boarded the ship and were forcibly taken away during the colonial period. One thousand individuals either prepared their own banners filled with protesting words and artwork or received ready-made banners. One thousand individuals holding their own banners stood connected to each other, making a U-shape to indicate their united minds in seeking justice and peace. A living "comfort woman," Kim Bok-Deuk, stood in the middle, i.e., 500th of the U-shaped line of the protesting agents.<sup>58</sup> Media reports showed that the participants represented boys and girls, and young and older members. Completing the cultural event, the representative social actor, Song Do-Ja, recalled that she was worried about how to meet the expenses for the event, but she had to proceed as she was looking into the sorrowful eyes of the 94-year-old grandma, Kim Bok-Deuk, who was the only remaining survivor in the region at the time. The single most important reason to host such an event is the hope to have the victims' basic human dignity restored as soon as possible or before they all die out.<sup>59</sup> What else is more sacred than

55 *Dagagagi*, November 17, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

56 *Dagagagi*, March 17, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

57 Cited in Miki Dezaki, producer of the film, *Shusenjo—The Main Battleground of the Comfort Women Issue*, <https://www.shusenjo.com/>, "일본은 더 이상 학교에서 위안부 문제를 가르치지 않는다 | 영화 주전장" (Japan Does Not Teach about the 'Comfort Women' at School). July 26, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukSkNAJ5Kao>, accessed August 20, 2020.

58 *Dagagagi*, December 8, 2011, accessed July 17, 2020; "통영거제 1000명 정의의 인간띠잇기 화보" (1000 Tongyeong-Geoje Citizens of Justice Connected to Each Other). *한산신문*, December 15, 2011, <http://www.hansannews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=32003>, accessed July 22, 2020.

59 *Dagagagi*, January 7, 2012, accessed May 17, 2020.



the basic human dignity of one single human? The same event was repeated in March 2015, accompanying the 98-year-old grandma Kim Bok-Deuk, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the National Independence.<sup>60</sup>

These cultural events such as the Wednesday Demonstration continue to encourage the corporate actors and even the grassroots to revisit human rights and peace as universal values in human history. Irrespective of whether it has been cold and windy, humid and hot, rainy or snowy, the social actors and the “comfort women” victims with their ill-health continue their protests in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul and at other venues. They find it unbearable to think even for a short moment about the once prevalent culture of deceiving the young girls and women, forcibly taking them away to put them under sexual slavery, and completely depriving them of their human dignity, happiness, and freedom. It was the Japanese imperialism and the invasive wars inflicted by Japan that underpinned all the anti-human criminal activities. The social actors and community members are still crying out to the Japanese government to apologize and reparate, and to the Korean government to take proactive action against Japan. In fact, the social actors are well informed of the prevalent culture of humiliation and secret dealing that the Korean government occasionally employed in their diplomatic relationship with Japan in terms of resolving the issue of the “comfort women” ever since Independence in 1945.<sup>61</sup> On August 30, 2011, Korean Constitutional Court ruled it unconstitutional that “the Korean government has taken up no action to develop systematic ways to have the ‘comfort women’ issue resolved, leaving the victims’ abused basic rights abandoned.” The social actors were adamant in urging that the Korean government be *aware* that the victims were desperately running out of time to have their basic dignities restored, and that the government should carry out its duty. I think these represent the social actors’ lamentation that the Korean government is not developing new ideas to deal with the concern. In August 2011, there were sixty-three victims alive although 234 of them were initially registered in South Korea.<sup>62</sup> As at May 26, 2020, there remained seventeen survivors.<sup>63</sup>

60 *Geoje Nyuseu Kwangjang (Geoje News Plaza)*. 2015. “‘위안부’ 일본정부 배상촉구 1000명 인간띠잇기 개최” (The Military ‘Comfort Women’ Seeking the Japanese Government’s Reparation: 1000 Community Members Demonstrate Human Connections). March 31, <http://www.gjnewsplaza.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1826>, accessed July 22, 2020.

61 *Dagagagi*, December 26, 2011, accessed May 17, 2020.

62 *Dagagagi*, December 26, 2011, accessed May 17, 2020.

63 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2020. “일본군 ‘위안부’ 피해자 별세...생존자 17명” (Passing of the ‘Comfort Women’ Victims ... Now 17 Remaining Alive). May 26, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/women/946565.html>, accessed July 23, 2020.

*More Cultural Programmes to Promote the Ideas: A Scholarship Programme, Erecting the Statues*

Analysis of *Dagagagi*, the website of the community movement, shows that there has been widespread community support for the resolution of the unresolved legacy of the "comfort women." The social actors in Tongyeong-Geoje cities have been part of the national level movement to influence the U.N. (United Nations), ILO (International Labour Organization), the American Congress, Korean and Japanese governments, which led to significant success, e.g., The U.S. House of Representatives House Resolution 121, passing on July 30, 2007 (Lee and Halpin 2020). *Dagagagi* initiated and achieved a similar resolution in the Tongyeong and Geoje City Councils, and also Gyeongsang-Namdo Provincial Council.<sup>64</sup> As noted, there are also ongoing local initiatives. The students at local schools engage in fundraising to support *Dagagagi*'s local activities.<sup>65</sup> *Dagagagi* had its tenth anniversary on April 27, 2012, and the commemoration was filled with reading poems, Tongyeong Flute Ensemble's presentations, dancing and singing performances by Tongyeong Girls High-school, a victim's speech (by Kim Bok-Deuk), acknowledging those individuals and local business/labour association donating funds and skills to *Dagagagi*'s activities. Mobilizing virtually the whole community, the commemoration was all geared towards restoring the dignity of the Japanese military "comfort women" and opening the days of justice and peace someday, and many participants in the evening had their eyes filled with tears.<sup>66</sup> The Memorial Statue of Justice (정의 비) was also erected in Tongyeong, and The Standing Statue of Peace (평화의 소녀상) in Geoje, through fundraising supported by the members of the cities.<sup>67</sup> The aims to erect the statues were to commemorate the victims, record the history and pave the road for human rights, justice, and peace.<sup>68</sup> Following the erection of the statues, there followed a youth competition to create a three-minute video clip to promote the statue. The competition was open to all the youth in the whole nation and entitled, "Justice for the Japanese Military 'Comfort Women,' Resolving It with Our Own Effort."<sup>69</sup> The prize-winning

64 *Dagagagi*, December 24, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

65 *Dagagagi*, April 16, 2007, accessed May 17, 2020.

66 *Dagagagi*, May 3, 2012 and August 23, 2012, accessed May 17, 2020.

67 *Dagagagi*, July 17, 2012, accessed May 17, 2020.

68 *Dagagagi*, November 6, 2012, accessed May 17, 2020.

69 *Dagagagi*, September 5, 2012, accessed May 17, 2020. The first prize clip is entitled "Kkochi Pinda" (The Flowers are Blossoming), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thP4J4FkczM>, January 3, 2014, accessed July 25, 2020. The two clips that shared second prize are entitled, "미래에"

high-school students brought their impressive digital skills to the video production, historical knowledge, and their passion to have the “comfort women” problem resolved.<sup>70</sup>

On November 4, 2013, the grandma Kim Bok-Deuk (96-years-old) donated her personal saving of \$20,000 to the scholarship fund of Tongyeong Girls High-school, which was “in support of the disadvantaged students’ translating their personal dreams into reality.” I think this action is not only a support for the future generation to enjoy a peaceful world, but an active protest against violence. Kim also donated another \$20,000 to the construction of Gyeongsang-Namdo Province’s Historical and Memorial Hall of the “Comfort Women.”<sup>71</sup> Kim’s donation of the latter \$20,000, which was all the asset she had at the time, became the seeding grant to plan the “citizens-initiated” first such construction. The community fund-raising contributed \$0.5m, the Korean central government \$0.5m, and the provincial government \$0.5–\$1.5m in total.<sup>72</sup> It was not only Kim but all the rest of the community at different levels who shared the value of justice and peace.

There were many other cultural events such as book talks with the authors on history or the “comfort women.” For example, a book talk with the author of *The House with Red Tile Roof* (빨간기와집, 2014), which Gawata Humiko wrote based on the life story of a military “comfort woman,” Bae Bong-Gi, who became the first witness of her own experience. Another book talk is with Morikawa Machiko, the author of *Mun Ok-Ju, the Japanese Military “Comfort Woman” in the Burmese Warfield* (버마전선 일본군 “위안부” 문옥주). The book talk flyer notes that the event is about “the contemporary Koreans talking about the past problem in order to imagine a peaceful future.”<sup>73</sup> In August 2018 and August 2019, *Dagagagi* hosted the National Youth Competition for Poems and Painting on the “comfort women.” The items that won the prizes were on display at the citizens’ gallery in Nagoya and Kyoto.<sup>74</sup>

우리가 꼭 보고싶은 뉴스” (The News We Are Anxious to Watch), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rApDJEWG7Q4>, January 3, 2014, accessed July 25, 2020 and “Gaehwa (Blossoming),” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGqtpPsgGU>, January 3, 2014, accessed July 25, 2020.

70 *Dagagagi*, November 15, 2013, accessed May 17, 2020.

71 *Dagagagi*, November 10, 2013, accessed May 17, 2020.

72 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. “경남 일본군 위안부 역사관 건립 추진” (Constructing Gyeongsang-Namdo Province’s Historical and Memorial Hall of the ‘Comfort Women’). October 28, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/area/yeongnam/914838.html>, accessed July 25, 2020.

73 *Dagagagi*, June 14, 2017, accessed July 25, 2020.

74 *Dagagagi*, July 30, 2018, August 5, 2019, and June 24, 2019, accessed May 17, 2020.

### People's Emergent Properties: The Capacities of Component Members

Depending upon the emergent structural and cultural properties, people's emergent properties appear accordingly, attempting to maximize their own life chances in the given context. These three types of emergent properties are conceptually distinct from each other. However, it is not a straightforward task to distinguish one from another when illustrating them empirically. Emergent structural and cultural properties are conditioning the structural and cultural context, in that the component members not only form part of the contextual changes, but also take active roles in calibrating the context to bring about changes. In this process, individual agents go through changes themselves, from primary agents to social actors, thus displaying double morphogenesis. I have already presented many of the protest activities as the social actors have engaged in opening the future of justice and peace. The following sections are to further illustrate their social movements, most of which were underpinned by the above-discussed emergent structural and cultural properties, then enabling the people's actions

#### *What the Victims Have Gone Through: Turning from the Victims to Advocates and Voluntary Social Actors*

The most proactive actors in the whole movement are the "comfort women" victims themselves. Their personal lives during and after the suffering as the "comfort women" have demonstrated an extreme level of resilience beyond most people's comprehension. Their resilient lives as well as witnessing what they have gone through have been a strong impetus for the social movement to fight for justice and peace in the future. Despite their age and frailty status, the victims have been the most proactive actors, witnessing their own experiences during the Wednesday Protests, community rallies, and international forums such as the United Nations, which has been well reported on the *Dagagagi* website and the major news outlets.

*Dagagagi* informs the community members of the victims' ailing health, their treatment in hospitals, recoveries, or eventual deaths. Their ill-health is due to the combined impact of the life-long post-traumatic anguishes and old age. During their ill health, the social actors remain the close aides to those grandmas without their own families. Indeed, social activists are much more than the children of the grandmas in terms of caring for them.<sup>75</sup> Also critical is the companionship of the co-sufferers who smile and

<sup>75</sup> *Dagagagi*, April 5, 2007, accessed May 17, 2020.

weep at each other's pain and recovery from ill-health.<sup>76</sup> Their unexpected hospitalization raises a great concern among the actors since the movement is making little progress.<sup>77</sup>

However, every human life is mortal. The death of the victims is one of the few most frequently discussed topics on the *Dagagagi* website. Losing about one grandma per month throughout the country in 2004 was causing serious concern as the grandmas were dying without receiving apologies from the Japanese government.<sup>78</sup> Every posting of their death is accompanied by their brief life trajectory and their final days of ailing health. According to the *Dagagagi* postings, the victims were typically from disadvantaged families and deceptively recruited to a factory in their late teens or early twenties. They ended up in “comforting stations” in China, Singapore, New Guinea, and Myanmar, and they slaved for a few to several years. In addition to sexual assault, there was physical and verbal violence against the victims far beyond what one can endure, which has been illustrated in numerous studies and films. At the end of the Second World War, many were killed or abandoned (Yun 1997: 291). Only some of those who returned to Korea were reunited with their families. The health impact of the assault has been lifelong. In the victims' last moments of life, their supporters and actors have nothing but to say, “We are sorry since we still could not get the apologies from Japan. We will continue to fight to have your dignities restored.”<sup>79</sup> Reading the postings, one realizes that these are desperate cries determined to see the resolution of the matter. The social actors' determination is the last message that the victims leave behind, i.e., ensuring a peaceful world for the next generation.

### *Grassroots Movement and Community Activities in Support of the Victims and Peaceful Future: Postcard Writing*

As discussed, there have been numerous community-based protests in support of human rights and a peaceful future. First, *Dagagagi* hosted a historical tour for the local citizens on September 1, 2012. It was a guided tour on foot, taking the participants to historically significant places in terms of Koreans' fighting for national Independence and the “comfort women” issue—the Gangguan Port where the girls were boarded and kidnapped, the post office, district office, fishnet manufacturing factory, theatre, market, and an Independence activist's memorial site.<sup>80</sup>

76 *Dagagagi*, August 5, 2012, accessed May 17, 2020.

77 *Dagagagi*, October 10, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

78 *Dagagagi*, October 5, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

79 *Dagagagi*, February 19, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

80 *Dagagagi*, August 23, 2012, accessed May 17, 2020.

Second, a notable movement in Tongyeong-Geoje cities is to write postcards to the members of the National Diet of Japan. This campaign to write to the members mobilizes the whole citizens of Tongyeong and Geoje cities, especially the students of middle and high schools. Teaching young people the history of Japanese imperialist behaviours is an important part of the whole social movement and the movement also aims to ensure a peaceful world for them. Having the youth involved in the grassroots movements helps them participate in remembering the dark history, so that the younger and older generations reflect on the history and plan actively for a better future (Kim 2018b; Lee 2016), which is intended for an effect of influencing the participants to change from primary agents to corporate agents, and then to social actors. Then, the reflection on the history offers a meaningful opportunity to think about the value of "public history" (de Groot 2009; Sayer 2015; cited in Kim 2018b). Thousands of students have participated in the writing campaign, and the postcards were beautifully packed and delivered to the National Diet of Japan. The following is an example:

Dear Sir/Madam, I am a high-school student in Korea. I am a member of a support group for the "comfort women/grandmas" and we are their chat companion. Seeing some of them pass away, we are desperately realizing the limited time left before they all die. Can you please legislate for the resolution of the issue of the Japanese military "comfort women?" Please do not forget the grandmas (Kim Ga-Eun).<sup>81</sup>

The agents' and actors' postcard writing reminds the members of the National Diet that Japan forcibly took away the grandmas and that they await sincere apologies and reparation from Japan.

Please, help their human rights be restored. I trust you will respond to my request. Thank you, Sir/Madam (Lee Seong-Hun, Geoje Jeil High-school).<sup>82</sup> When taken away, the grandmas were as young as me and with lots of dreams. Their hopes and dreams were all crushed (Kim Ji-Eun, Geoje Jeil High-school).<sup>83</sup>

I am saddened and angered by all the sufferings the grandmas are still going through (Lee Eun-Jeong, Tongyeong Girls' High-school).<sup>84</sup>

81 *Dagagagi*, October 31, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

82 *Dagagagi*, October 29, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

83 *Dagagagi*, October 30, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

84 *Dagagagi*, November 1, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

*Dagagagi* also organized the campaign to write postcards to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) from September to November 2013.<sup>85</sup> In conjunction with a good number of Japanese activists with shared interests in justice and peace, members of *Dagagagi* visited Japanese local governments as well as the National Diet of Japan, exchanging declarations for a peaceful world and raising awareness in the public.<sup>86</sup> Mostly working to raise awareness of the issue of the “comfort women,” *Dagagagi* has only partly accomplished its goals which are still in progress. However, *Dagagagi* has run into obstacles in making any progress with any meaningful responses from the Korean and Japanese governments. *Dagagagi* has urged both to work together for the resolution of the matter. *Dagagagi* members have been particularly disappointed with the Park Geun-Hye government, for showing little understanding of or sympathy for the suffering of the military “comfort women.” Park has not only refused to meet the victims but her government allowed the publication of a misinformed history book, which *Dagagagi* understands was “for the sake of brainwashing the youth and misleading them. These ahistorical and pro-Japanese approaches are against the restoration of human rights and justice.”<sup>87</sup> These misinformed approaches to human rights and justice are disturbing.<sup>88</sup>

There are numerous community supports and encouragement for the “comfort women” grandmas and *Dagagagi* activities. For example, donations from anonymous Koreans living overseas,<sup>89</sup> birthday parties for the grandmas,<sup>90</sup> attending nationwide human rights camps,<sup>91</sup> a trip to spa, and Mt. Jiri,<sup>92</sup> a local Rotary club inviting the grandmas to a buffet lunch,<sup>93</sup> overnight excursions to nature,<sup>94</sup> and *Dagagagi* leaders’ monthly meetings. These activities require a significant level of commitment and sacrifice in terms of time, effort, and financial contribution. These social actors see the grandmas as historical victims, who cannot be forgotten if

85 *Dagagagi*, September 13, 2013, accessed May 17, 2020.

86 *Dagagagi*, December 14, 2009, accessed May 17, 2020.

87 *Dagagagi*, September 16, 2013, accessed May 17, 2020.

88 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2020. “[사설] 광복절 ‘친일 청산’ 다짐조차 트집 잡는 통합당” (Editorial: United Future Party is Against the Independence Day Speech to Settle the Matter of the Pro-Japanese Fellows). August 16, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/opinion/editorial/958002.html>, accessed August 18, 2020.

89 *Dagagagi*, August 4, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

90 *Dagagagi*, August 30, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

91 *Dagagagi*, October 4, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

92 *Dagagagi*, November 11, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

93 *Dagagagi*, July 18, 2005, accessed May 17, 2020.

94 *Dagagagi*, May 23, 2007, accessed May 17, 2020.

justice and peace are to be ensured for future generations. *Dagagagi* as a social movement raises its voice against pro-Japanese traitors (친일파). For example, Tongyeong Police Station maintained a ritual to commemorate Kim Deok-Bo (1852–1941) as she donated ¥170,000 to the construction of the station. *Dagagagi* demanded that the commemoration be stopped and the commemoration stone be removed since the police stations under Japanese imperialism were at the forefront of oppressing Koreans.<sup>95</sup>

*International Solidarity with the Victims and Supporters around the World, and Including Those in Japan*

*Dagagagi* is located far from the capital area, but it is a strongly determined, well-connected, and strategic protest group. The victims and social actors make an integral part of the national movement working closely in international solidarity with the victims and supporters in North Korea, Japan, and other continents. First, *Dagagagi* actors and local victims participated in the 698th Wednesday Demonstration (combined with Human Rights Camp) in Mt. Keumgang in North Korea on March 1, 2006 to commemorate March First Independence Movement. The site was at what was then a South Korean-run resort complex in North Korea. The camp was an opportunity to unload the shared pain and strengthen solidarity with the victims in North Korea, and also improve mutual understanding between the victims and social actors, which would lead to a more effective social movement. The camp also aimed to offer the grandmas a refreshing time in the beautiful Mt. Keumgang, which is a nationally significant place.<sup>96</sup>

Second, *Dagagagi* is connected to like-minded Japanese and Koreans in Japan. Grandma Kim Bok-Deuk and two social actors were invited to Nagoya. Kim engaged in describing Japan's war crime against the "comfort women" to the Japanese public, and the Korean-Japanese associations, and through media interviews.<sup>97</sup> Kim Bok-Deuk, Song Do-Ja (the representative of *Dagagagi*), and the social actors from Gyeongsang-Namdo Province attended public meetings in Tokyo and Osaka, supported by the Japanese activists. Kim's description of her broken arms due to physical violence and suffering in the "comforting station," and the screening of a twenty-minute video, *Somang* (The Hope), made the eyes of all the audience fill with tears. The Japanese activists displayed the Japanese translation of the postcards that the high-school students wrote. The Women's Active Museum on War

95 *Dagagagi*, March 3, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

96 *Dagagagi*, February 23, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

97 *Dagagagi*, September 20, 2007, accessed May 17, 2020.



and Peace in Tokyo provided the delegates with ideas on how to build a similar museum in Gyeongsang-Namdo Province.<sup>98</sup>

Third, the military “comfort women” victims and the voluntary social actors of *Dagagagi* in Tongyeong-Geoje cities and their counterparts in Changwon City (eleven persons in total) visited the National Diet of Japan in October 2010. The aim was for the victims to convey their messages to the National Diet before they all died. Their messages were to remind the Japanese leaders of the crimes committed during the war, the values of women’s rights and peace, and the need to have the victims’ basic dignities restored. The eventual hope was to seek the possibility of establishing solidarity between Korea and Japan to build a peaceful world.<sup>99</sup>

Fourth, facing the persistent resistance from Japan to the resolution of war crimes such as the Japanese military “comfort women,” seven relevant representative groups from Asia and the United States formed an international movement in solidarity (Min, Chung, and Yim 2019). The Asian countries included North and South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, and China. Ninety-four social actors, including several victims, from the seven countries attended a forum in Seoul, May 21–22, 2004. The forum was particularly concerned with the victims of Japan’s war crimes, including the 800,000 people under forced labour, 1 million massacred, and 200,000 “comfort women.” The Seoul forum passed the resolution to initiate a massive petition in each country and take the collected petition to the U.N.; the representatives from each country were to work with the Parliament in their own country; hold protest rallies simultaneously in each country; and host the international forum regularly.<sup>100</sup> The eighth forum in Seoul included the participants, in addition to those from the seven countries, from Indonesia, the Netherlands, Germany, and Australia.<sup>101</sup> Grassroots movements such as these have mixed results, acquiring meaningful support from the parliaments overseas on the one hand, and continuing to face obstacles due to no action from the Japanese government on the other. The U.N. and ILO benefit from receiving Japan’s financial contribution, which may influence their lack of action to resolve the above-mentioned matters.<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, *Dagagagi* and other national and international movements with the same goal remain determined and continue to pursue their goals.<sup>103</sup>

98 *Dagagagi*, December 10, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

99 *Dagagagi*, September 9, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

100 *Dagagagi*, June 2, 2004, accessed May 17, 2020.

101 *Dagagagi*, May 24, 2007, accessed May 17, 2020.

102 *Dagagagi*, March 17, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

103 *Dagagagi*, March 17, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

I think it is appropriate to finish with a couple of students' pleas to the Japanese government:

Please apologize and reparate, and enable them to forgive you [Japan] before they die. So that they can go in peace. Please put yourself in the shoes of the grandmas (Kim Su-Bin and Ma Hee-Ju).<sup>104</sup>

Unlike us studying in an air-conditioned classroom, the grandmas were abused by the Japanese soldiers who were aggressive and violent in the warfield. It is not about money. Please apologize before too late so that the grandmas can forgive you (Kim Min-Ji).<sup>105</sup>

These are desperate appeals from the high-school girls. How can they refuse to listen to them and respond to their requests? Yet, the requests have constantly been ignored, as the human rights of the "comfort women" have also been. Disappointingly, it is this kind of helpless and desperate feeling that corporate agents and voluntary social actors of the movement find it difficult to overcome. They feel like running into a brick wall, facing the brazen-faced Japanese governments, Korean governments' indifference, and Korean peoples' increasing impatience to fight against injustice over a period.<sup>106</sup>

## Discussion and Concluding Remarks

The suffering of the Japanese military "comfort women" is a historical incident inflicted by the powerful Japanese nation-state and its agents, who committed acts of violence against other weaker nation-states and their people. Putting women under sexual slavery is the complete destruction of their human dignity. Even after the end of sexual slavery with the end of the Second World War, the victims had nowhere to complain or ask for compensation because of the continuity of the uneven power relationship between the superpower (Japan) and the weaker nation-state (Korea). These processes greatly differ from Nazi Germany and its victimized neighbouring countries. At the time of Korea's rapid economic development, the Korean government's interest was not to disturb the (unequal economic) relationship

104 *Dagagagi*, October 15, 2010 and October 17, 2010, accessed May 17, 2020.

105 *Dagagagi*, March 17, 2006, accessed May 17, 2020.

106 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2005. "정신대 할머니와 함께 하는 시민모임" (The Citizens to Support the 'Comfort Women' Victims). August 11, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/PRINT/56756.html>, accessed August 19, 2020.

between Japan and Korea, so that Japan would be “willing enough” to transfer technologies to Korea and support its economic development. A predominant proportion of Koreans was cooperative with the governments’ concerted efforts for the nation’s development, which was used as a source of legitimizing the authoritarian and undemocratic regimes. Therefore, structural development was at the centre of the whole nation, backed up by the people, and there was little room to reflect on the victims of Japanese colonialism such as the military “comfort women” and the forced labourers, till the late 1980s. Further, Koreans under their cultural traditions around gender and sexuality turned their backs on the victims. Many families could not embrace the returned and injured daughters after the Second World War, which has similar features to honour killings from other cultural and historical contexts.

Following the successful hosting of the 1988 Seoul Olympics, which was a turning point for Korean economic development, Koreans started enjoying the fruits of their decades-long diligent work. The restriction on travel overseas was lifted in 1988 and Kim Hak-Sun, a victim of the military “comfort women,” spoke out for the first time in Korea on August 14, 1991. The Japanese government’s official denial, in June 1990, of engaging in the forced recruitment of the “comfort women” and establishing the “comforting stations” angered the victims. Then, the victims’ peace movement had an impetus to commence the long battle to redress the damages (Yoon 2015: 197–198). A private research institute, The Center for Historical Truth and Justice (민족문제연구소)<sup>107</sup> was established in February 1991 and launched a massive project to research and reveal a list of thousands of Koreans and their activities, who betrayed their nation and acted pro-Japanese to the Japanese imperialists and their subordinates. With the significant economic development in Korea, the victims have become confident enough to publicly raise their sufferings and demand compensation, and there has been a dramatic culture change to appreciate human dignity and human rights. The level of public protests has exponentially strengthened in the last two decades.

A good number of social movements at the national level have been pursuing ways to rectify the legacies of Japanese colonialism, e.g., the pro-Japanese continuing to enjoy the privileges acquired as a result of betraying their fellow Koreans. There have been significant efforts by academic and grassroots communities to address these issues for the sake of human rights and justice, which had been ignored for a long period. The Korean National

107 <https://www.minjok.or.kr/>

Assembly has been a significantly supportive force in this process. However, the turn-coats have been enjoying their privileges for so long and they have caused significant obstacles in re-establishing the values of justice and fraternity. The advanced status of the Korean economy and its place in the international community have made remarkable differences domestically and internationally. However, Japan's imperialist policies and attitudes, especially towards South Korea, have little changed, and are closely reflected in the Japanese media and school textbooks. Thus, these have blocked any possible breakthrough of a broad range of Korean governments' or social movements' seeking the Japanese government's apologies and reparation for the Japanese military "comfort women."

Nonetheless, the majority of the Korean public has displayed the change from *primary agents* to *corporate agents* to use Archer's words (2003), increasingly aware of the social problems and making their public commitment. Grassroots social movements have been formed and pursued rigorously, and their commitment has been extraordinary. *Dagagagi* is a movement within one of the most affected districts—Tongyeong-Geoje cities. The changes in cultural contexts enabled by structural changes have provided the Korean public and grassroots with the confidence to actively engage the local, national, and international movements. The social movements to restore the dignities of the "comfort women" have hosted numerous cultural events such as film festivals, exhibitions, competitions to create video clips, erecting the Statues of Peace, and writing postcards to the Japanese Diet, which have been extremely successful in mobilizing the grassroots and have a large number of them meaningfully engaged in the social movement. The social activists, in cooperation with *Dagagagi*, and in solidarity with their counterparts in other affected nations have won the hearts of National Assemblies of the U.S., Canada, the Netherlands, and the European Union, which have passed the resolution to demand the Japanese government's apologies and reparation for the "comfort women" victims. One of the significant aspects of *Dagagagi's* grassroots movement is that the older generation encouraged the youth to be involved since all the corporate actors are determined not to see the violence repeated against future generations. This is a concentrated and transcendental form of nationalism deeply embedded in the minds of Koreans today.

Most victims have passed away and only sixteen live as at July 7, 2020,<sup>108</sup> but the crimes remain unresolved. The movement has to continue until Japan provides its formal apologies to the victims. However, the Japanese

108 The number is down to fourteen as at May 3, 2021; and twelve as at February 24, 2022.

government and the majority of people have not offered apologies. In recent years with the Moon Jae-In regime, supported by the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*, the structure of Korean politics and economy has changed significantly, and so has the relationship between Korea and Japan. Supported by the increasingly strengthening status of the Korean economy and its roles in the international community, Korea's corporate and voluntary social actors, in particular, want to and are determined to see the impact of the changes through the resolution of the issue of the "comfort women." As I have discussed, different historical stages have significantly changed the Korean public perceptions of the "comfort women." The most recent stage is the Japanese trade provocation in 2019 and the Korean people's protest, the "No Japan, No Abe" movement, which I will analyse in another chapter. I argue that these successful protests against Japan will further galvanize the movement to demand apologies and reparation for the "comfort women." All these movements are important processes in restoring some degree of the dignity of the victims, and the nation-state as well as national identities in the 21st century. There are enough geopolitical reasons for Korea and Japan to collaborate, but this is unlikely unless the grassroots are provided with the reasons to change their views about Japan.

Calculated nationalism in this chapter is not as apparent, but subtle. Korean grassroots have been calculating "time and space" in terms of choosing the right time and methods to confront the Korean and Japanese governments. Further, the grassroots are not blindly standing against the Japanese in general, but its past misdeeds in history to have rectified. This certainly demonstrates the grassroots' calculated nationalism.

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## 4 “No Abe, Yes Japan” Movement in 2019

### Bolstering National Pride and Identity

The era of elitism whereby elites teach the masses is over since progressive intellectuals are no better than the mass.

Bae (2019: 271)

#### Abstract

Park Geun-Hye's hasty and inadequate agreement to settle the Japanese military “comfort women” issue with the Japanese government led by Abe Shinzo in December 2015 turned out to be devastating to the victims and the majority of socially and historically conscious South Koreans. Following Park's impeachment and the election of Moon Jae-In, the Korean government faced a few ongoing related legal cases and attempted to redress the matter, which then angered Japan's Prime Minister Abe who appeared to look down upon the Korean nation-state. Abe instigated a trade provocation, creating obstacles for some Japanese corporations exporting a few key products to Korean electronics companies. As a response to this trade provocation, Koreans initiated a large-scale boycott against Japan—the “No Abe, No Japan” movement.

**Keywords:** trade provocation, Abe Shinzo, “No Japan” movement, boycotting Japan

### Introduction

“No Abe, No Japan” was a South Korean grassroots social movement to boycott Japanese products and also Japan as a tourist destination. It began on July 2, 2019 as a protest against Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's July 1, 2019 announcement of a trade provocation against Korea. This trade provocation restricted the export of three chemicals from Japan to South Korea; the chemicals were critical for the manufacturing of semiconductors

and display screens. The three chemicals were: fluorinated polyimide, resist, and hydrogen fluoride. Intending to support the Korean government's reluctance to be subservient to the provocation, Korean grassroots, without the government's intervention, launched a counter-attack against the Japanese government's trade restriction.

Following the Japanese announcement, the restriction became effective on July 4, 2019 and required Japanese exporters to seek permission each time they wanted to export any of the three chemicals to South Korea. It took ninety days to obtain permission.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Tokyo removed South Korea from the so-called "white list," stripping away some of South Korea's preferential treatment in Japan's trade with South Korea (Korea hereafter unless specified).

The "No Japan" movement was a nationwide movement not to buy Japanese products, nor to travel to Japan. What was unique about Japan's trade provocation was that Japan was willingly giving up the profits out of the export items to Korea. Tokyo's abrupt imposition of the restriction caused significant turmoil to many electronic manufacturers in Korea, disrupting the closely linked network of neighbouring economies of Korea and Japan. Korea's semiconductor manufacturers, Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix "supplied 61 per cent of components used in memory chips globally in 2018."<sup>2</sup> If they were unable to source alternatives to supply the chemicals, a global disruption in memory chip supply was predicted inevitable. This would eventually lead to affecting the production of mobile devices, PCs, and other electronic products, causing a price hike.

Prime Minister Abe blamed Korea's inadequate management of the chemicals and was concerned with the possible smuggling of the chemicals to North Korea and its usage of them for developing military weapons. The Korean government denied this.<sup>3</sup> The "No Japan" Movement needs to be contextualized in the broader national and international context as well as the Japanese colonialism in the past. How the grassroots responded to an international dispute in their mass protests is of particular interest. This chapter has the following aims: (1) to identify consumer boycott motivations,

1 CNBC. 2019. The Japan-South Korea Dispute Could Push up the Price of Your Next Smartphone. July 22, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/07/23/japan-south-korea-dispute-impact-on-semiconductor-supply-chain-prices.html>, accessed November 17, 2020.

2 The Japan-South Korea Dispute Could Push up the Price of Your Next Smartphone.

3 "일본 '對한국 수출규제 품목, 북한 화학무기에 사용될 수도' 추가보복 정당화" (Japan, Its Export-Restricted Items May be Used to Build North Korea's Chemical Weapons). *Hankook Ilbo*, July 6, 2019, <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201907060024748842>, accessed November 17, 2020.

(2) to ascertain the modes of the grassroots movement to boycott Japanese products or travelling to Japan, and (3) to analyse news reports of the movement with reference to structure, culture, and agency (Archer 1995).

## Literature Review

International trade is a crucial element for the well-being of a nation-state and its people. Past and/or contemporary political, economic, or cultural conflicts between nations can cause economic animosity which may lead to boycotting products from particular countries. Surveying the literature on boycotting foreign products, Kang (2019) found five major influential factors that can cause boycotting of foreign products. First, consumer ethnocentrism can take a social-psychological and emotional role in purchasing behaviour of foreign products (Klein, Etterson, and Krishnan 2006). According to Shimp and Sharma (1987), ethnocentrism can influence consumers' intention to purchase foreign products and can also negatively affect their perception of the quality of foreign products (Klein, Etterson, and Morris 1998). Hostile relationships in the past, due to war or colonialism, such as the ones between Korea-Japan, China-Japan (both resulting from Japanese imperialism) and the tension between Australia-France (due to French nuclear tests in the South Pacific) caused consumer ethnocentrism (Guo and Kwon 2015; Park and Jang 2012; Yoon 2014; Etterson and Klein 2005; Heslop, Lu, and Cray 2009). Second, closely related to consumer ethnocentrism and the focus of this chapter is consumer animosity, which refers to "remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events" (Klein, Etterson, and Morris 1998). Kuwaitis developed a strong animosity against Denmark due to the depiction of the Prophet Muhammed in the Danish press (Maher and Mady 2010). Klein et al. (1998) pointed out a key difference between the two concepts that consumer ethnocentrism determines the judgment of the perceived quality of and intention to purchase foreign products, whereas consumer animosity affects only the intention to buy. In this respect, what is observed in the boycott under examination in this chapter is consumer animosity in tandem with ethnocentrism. That is, there is a significant overlap between them (Chan, Chan, and Leung 2010).

Third, "identification with the victim" can occur when a particular product has caused damage to its customers, thus other customers fear being the victims as well. This cognitive or emotional fear can make one identify with the victims, which then motivates them to support the victims and potentially participate in boycotting the product (Park and Park 2018; Kang

2019: 201). Fourth, as customers become aware of a company's involvement in misdeeds such as unethical actions or causing damage to its customers, they could develop a sense of "perceived egregiousness" of the company and participate in the boycott (Klein, Smith, and John 2004). A company's engagement in egregious actions against nature, such as catching whales or seals, can make the products made in the relevant country the targets of international boycotting. Fifth, "perceived efficacy" refers to the extent to which potential boycott participants believe in achieving a successful boycott of a product. The higher the level of perceived efficacy is, the more likely a customer will join the boycott.

Since the trade dispute was related to historical and contemporary conflicts between Korea and Japan, all of these five intentions are relevant. Korean grassroots were centred on patriotic nationalism and voluntarily put their efforts into fighting against Japan's economic imperialism. The literature on the above-discussed five key motivations in "mobilizing boycott foreign products" point to two main factors: (1) wishing the boycott target to discontinue its egregious behaviour or policy (Braunsberger and Buckler 2011) and (2) consumer animosity towards a specific country (Etterson and Klein 2005; Klein 2002). Boycotting foreign products may involve either one of these two broad factors or both of them. In the case of Korea's boycott of Japanese products, Japan chose to restrict the exports of the chemicals to Korean industries as a way to rebuke the Korean court rulings. Korean grassroots expressed no complaint against Japanese products but against the Japanese government's restrictions on the chemicals. Therefore, animosity is at the heart of the trade dispute under examination. Moreover, the "No Abe, No Japan" campaign tended to blur the distinction between Japanese products, the manufacturers, and Japan as a nation-state. That is, the animosity was directed at Abe and Japan without disliking the product. I draw on Lee and Lee's (2013) concepts of "multidimensionality of animosity: historical and contemporary" for my analysis of the "No Abe, No Japan" Movement.

### **Multidimensionality of Animosity: Historical and Contemporary**

Studies have empirically proven the lasting impact of war animosity and military conflicts on the boycotting of foreign products (Ang et al. 2004; Chan, Chan, and Leung 2010), which is relevant to Korean animosity towards colonial Japan. The animosity has been passed from previous to current generations (Lee and Lee 2013). As Lee and Lee (2013: 274) aptly argue, economic animosity has direct relevance to the everyday needs of Korean grassroots and can be easily triggered and intensified (Riefler and

Diamantopoulos 2007). Indeed, historical animosity which remains vividly real can be a deadly fuel. Any international sports match between Korea and Japan draws the attention from the whole nations of Korea and Japan. Koreans feel it is completely unbearable to lose a match. Korea's "No Japan" movement poses a worthwhile case to review as it involves the interaction between sustained historical animosity and abrupt contemporary animosity. Korea has been an "underdog" for decades and there is a prevalent sense of attempting to overcome Korea's economic inferiority complex. Historical animosity works much like sustained (intransitive) structural relationships and it is not likely to change quickly. Lee and Lee aptly suggest that historical or contemporary animosity is not linear, but entails "different temporal characteristics" (Lee and Lee 2013: 274), which originate from war atrocities, and economic and political animosity, and can be manifested differently depending upon the specific nature of a boycott. Japanese products are generally popular and have been trusted in the Korean market for decades. How this high "valence of product judgment" was affected by, or affects, different dimensions of historical and contemporary animosity during the boycott is of particular interest. In other words, how did Korean consumers temporarily withdraw from their purchasing habits and needs during the boycott (cf., Shoham et al. 2006)?

## Research Methods

Studies of product boycotts have predominantly employed quantitative methods (Shin 2001; Klein 2002; Nijssen and Douglas 2004; Ahn, Kwak, and Hwang 2014). As I am interested in analysing the manifestation of historical and contemporary animosity in a grassroots mobilization, my primary intention is not to measure quantitatively the weight of each dimension in terms of its significance. Considering the aims of this chapter, including a descriptive analysis of the process of the "No Japan" movement, a qualitative approach is suitable. The chapter provides an analysis of "what factors are important and why" to the Korean grassroots protestors, to demonstrate the intertwined complexity of historical and contemporary Korean animosity towards Japan. For this purpose, I analyse Korean news reports and relevant websites such as the "No Japan" site. In this respect, I employ the method of "netnography" to a degree (Kozinets 2002).

There were 894 news reports registered by KINDS (Korea Integrated News Database System), based on search words, "노 재팬" (No Japan), covering from July 1, 2019 to December 31, 2020. The bulk of the news



reports was published in the first two months—July and August 2019. I wanted to track this issue over time while intending to obtain a manageable data set. From September 2019, 10 to 40 news reports were published per month. I have downloaded news reports covering the period from July 1 to August 31, 2019 (n: 545), and alternate months after that. That is, 2019 October (n: 38), December (n: 42); and 2020 February (n: 31), April (n: 11), June (n: 7), August (n: 15), October (n: 6), December (10). This provided 705 news reports in total. I have also reviewed *노재팬* (No Japan)<sup>4</sup> and *노노재팬* (No No Japan)<sup>5</sup> sites. The analysis focuses on what the grassroots did, their boycott intentions, and participation. The boycott was not just a domestic matter which may only attract attention from particular sectors within Korea, but also a national protest against Japan's trade provocation, and therefore reported about Korean national animosity with a limited portion of dissident voices.

While my primary interest is about grassroots views and activities, I found it difficult to separate elite perspectives from the grassroots due to a close intersection between them. For this issue, the former affects the latter and vice versa. I have made a conscious effort to prioritize the grassroots perspectives and activities. I have attempted to reduce the representations of elites' (e.g., intellectuals and reporters) views on "what to do" but included elites' views of what the grassroots are doing.

## Findings and Discussion

### A Morphogenetic Background of the "No Japan" Movement

In the Korea-Japan relationship, there is historical animosity towards Japan, which is deeply embedded in the Korean psyche. When the contemporary relationship between the two countries becomes hostile, the related structurally and culturally embedded properties resurface immediately and exacerbate the hostility. This does not mean that Koreans are unconditionally hostile towards Japan or Japanese products. Once the contemporary concern is resolved, the inherent structural and cultural animosity subsides until the coming of another dispute (cf., Heslop, Lu, and Cray 2008). In fact, the founder of the "No Japan" website contended that we live in the era of trade globalization and that we ought not to mix up the issue of history

4 *노재팬*, <https://nojapan.kr/>

5 *노노재팬*, <https://nonojapan.com>

and contemporary trade.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the “No Japan” campaign is not about revenging Japan’s colonialism. Indeed, Korean society is affluent and cosmopolitan enough to accept that purchasing foreign products is by no means considered inappropriate or immoral—i.e., consumer ethnocentrism is not normally in operation in Korea (Shimp and Sharma 1987). Some have argued that Koreans are not against the Japanese but Prime Minister Abe, thus the movement should be called “No Abe.”<sup>7</sup>

The hostile relationship between Korea and Japan was apparent during the Chosun dynasty (1392–1910) which included the Japanese invasion of Korea (1592–1598). The Japanese colonialism in Korea (1910–1945) left the peninsula devastated and remains bitter memories in the minds of the Koreans and their descendants. Korea and Japan signed “The Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea” in 1965. This treaty allowed Japan to wash off its past misdeeds against Korea and for Park Chung-Hee, the military *coup d’etat* leader, to receive ransom money to inject into the economic development of Korea, which assisted in legitimizing his unlawful regime. However, since the 1990s (or soon after the 1988 Seoul Olympics), in an increasingly affluent and democratic Korea, there have been newly emergent structural and cultural characteristics. That is, there was a remarkable difference between the time of signing the treaty in the 1960s, and the 1990s in terms of structural and cultural contexts. The individual and national economies have made remarkable improvements. Travelling in personal vehicles and travelling overseas became common. The culture of seeking individual rights became prevalent and explicit. South Korea’s national status in the international community also improved significantly. It was in this context that the victims of the Japanese military “comfort women” and forced labour sought a legal challenge for compensation, risking the revelation of their traumatic personal struggles (see Chapter 3). What the 1965 Treaty settled and what it did not have become highly controversial.

On October 30, 2018, South Korea’s Supreme Court handed down two rulings that two Japanese companies—Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries—compensate fifteen Korean wartime forced

6 “일본제품 불매운동은 개개인의 자유입니다” (Participating in Boycott Japanese Products Is Up to the Individuals). *No Japan*, July 14, 2019, <https://nojapan.kr/notice/2?page=2>, accessed November 13, 2020.

7 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. “사실: ‘노 재팬’ 아닌 ‘노 아베,’ 지혜롭고 성숙한 대응을” (Editorial: ‘No, Abe.’ Rather Than ‘No, Japan.’ in Support of Wisdom and Maturity). August 6, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/opinion/editorial/904760.html>, accessed November 18, 2020.

labourers.<sup>8</sup> Japan rejected the court ruling and this court ruling has widely been reported as the reason that Prime Minister Abe initiated the retaliation against Korean industries in July 2019.<sup>9</sup> As noted, this trade dispute between Korea and Japan was a result of the intertwining of historical and contemporary animosity between the two nations. Japan continues to exert its superior control towards Korea and the latter resists. Jeong (2013) points out that Japan's hatred towards Korea is based on Japan's deep-rooted superiority complex, Japanese politics' shifting to the far right, historical trauma, the distorting of historical facts, the anti-Korean Wave, and Korea's remarkable economic progress (Park and Choi 2019; Lee and Lee 2020). When Japanese representatives or individuals attempt to manifest some of these in their interactions with Koreans, the latter strike back. "No Abe, No Japan" movement is one of them. The campaign was a way to bolster Korea's national pride and identity as Korea exerts its growing power over Japan. In what follows, I analyse how new structures and cultures evolve, influencing each other over time, and how they can be mobilized by the agents.

Seeking historically based causal relations between contemporary and past animosities, I find useful the methodological processes of abduction (reinterpretation) and retroduction (tracing the causal elements from the realm of "the real")—(Sayer 1992).

### **Continuity of Japanese Imperialism, and the Recent Economic Invasion**

The predominant majority of Koreans, young and older, are aware of the problem of forced labour during Japanese colonialism, and how Japan has vehemently denied reparation for the victims. This eventually led to Prime Minister Abe's trade provocation against Korea and consequently Korea's boycott of Japanese products. Koreans were well informed of the continuing dispute between Korea and Japan regarding the reparation for the Japanese military "comfort women" and forced labour during the colonial period. This included the Korean Supreme Court's ruling to dispose of the assets of the crime-committed Japanese corporations in Korea to compensate

8 *Reuters*. 2018. "South Korean Court Angers Japan With Order to Compensate Wartime Laborers." November 29, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-forcedlabour-southkorea/south-korean-court-angers-japan-with-order-to-compensate-wartime-laborers-idUSKCN1NY05D>, accessed November 18, 2020.

9 "The Japan-South Korea Dispute Could Push up the Price of Your Next Smartphone," *CNBC*.

the victims. Koreans have been reminded of the past Japanese invasions of Korea and the maltreatment of Koreans, which were at the heart of the trade provocation. Five students in Sanae High School in Hwacheon-district announced, “We shall boycott all the Japanese products until Japan withdraws the trade provocation.”<sup>10</sup> They produced information leaflets about forced labour during colonialism and the victims, to inform their peers at the school. They displayed a banner across the school gate: “Not going, Not buying—No, Boycott Japan.” Yun So-Eun, one of the students noted: “I have learned a lot and become highly conscious of Korean history. We will continue to publicize correct history to fellow Koreans around us.” On July 20, 2019 one thousand five hundred people gathered in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to protest against Abe’s trade provocation, arguing that “the Supreme Court’s decision was a token to redress Japan’s abuse of human rights. They also accused Japan of preparing to become a military superpower again.”<sup>11</sup>

Abe’s trade provocation inflamed the pre-existing animosity towards Japan. Koreans recalled Japanese invasions of Korea (1592–1598) and Japanese colonialism (1910–1945). *Kyeongnam Shinmun* reported that ordinary Koreans (or the grassroots) regarded the trade provocation as Japan’s second invasion of Korea following the first one 420 years ago.<sup>12</sup> On August 6, 2019, small and middle-size shop owners and nineteen civic organizations in Incheon, formed the “No Abe, No Japan Action Group,” and accused Japan’s economic invasion of history distortion and argued that Korea’s economic independence will complete Korean national Independence from Japan. They have mobilized the actions of boycotting Japanese products and travelling to Japan as a way of achieving economic self-reliance.<sup>13</sup>

Since 2000, there have been four boycotts against Japanese products, in response to Japan’s history textbook distortions and territorial claims

10 *Gangwon Ilbo*. 2019. “日 경제보복 불매운동 확산: ‘NO, 안사요 안가요 안먹어요’” (Diffusion of Boycott Against Japan’s Economic Revenge: ‘NO, Not Buying, Not Going, Not Eating’). July 19, <http://m.kwnews.co.kr/nview.asp?s=501&aid=219071800018>, accessed January 3, 2021.

11 *Asia Kyeongje*. 2019. “아베 나와라! 일본 불매운동 끝까지 간다, 옥일승천기 찢고 촛불집회까지” (Come on Abe! ‘Boycotting Japan Will Continue’ Tearing Up the Rising Sun Flag and Holding Candle-Light Protests).” July 22, <https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2019072209264441894>, accessed January 3, 2021.

12 *Kyeongnam Shinmun*. 2019. “No Abe.” August 9, <http://www.knnews.co.kr/news/articleView.php?idxno=1298342&gubun=>, accessed January 3, 2021.

13 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. “인천지역 ‘노 재팬’ 운동 ‘조선일보’ 절독으로 확산” (No Japan Movement in Incheon and Boycotting *Chonsun Ilbo*.)” *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, August 6, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/area/capital/904704.html#csidx78f41f1b55bead5a15c4f8398216747>, accessed January 4, 2021.

of ownership of Dokdo Island in the East Sea of Korea.<sup>14</sup> All the boycotts have faded away, as the one in 2019 would eventually. However, unlike other boycotts in the past, the 2019 boycott was triggered by Japan's trade provocation directly threatening the economic well-being of Koreans. What makes the boycott particularly different is the emergent structures and cultures within Korean politics and the economy, consequently leading to the people's emergent properties. Since Park Geun-Hye government's humiliating resolution on the Japanese military "comfort women" in 2015 and the Korean Supreme Court ruling for the crime-committed Japanese corporations to compensate the victims of forced labour, the political orientation of the government has changed. The Korean peninsula has been up to now under a progressive President since 2017, and the ruling Democratic Party won a significant majority in the April 15 general election in 2019. Moreover, during the boycott period (since July 2019), Korea enjoyed a relatively strong economic strength and productivity nationally and internationally, including in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Korean government's successful control of COVID-19 and the ever-increasing popularity of Korea's cultural products such as K-Pop (e.g., BTS) and films (e.g., *Parasite*) have provided Koreans with added confidence. This level of national pride is real and something that Koreans have rarely perceived previously.<sup>15</sup>

Ever since the hastily signed 1965 Basic Treaty between Korea and Japan, Korean citizens and progressive political figures have argued the need to revisit the Treaty. However, Japan has maintained the legitimacy of the 1965 Treaty, which has continued till the 2015 Korea-Japan negotiation on the Japanese military "comfort women," who were excluded from the process.<sup>16</sup> Then came the Korean Supreme Court ruling for Japanese companies to compensate the fifteen wartime forced labourers, which angered the Abe regime igniting the trade war. Neither the Korean

14 *e-Daily*. 2019. "新韓日전쟁④역대 日불매운동은?" (New Korea-Japan War, Past Boycotts Against Japan). August 14, <https://www.edaily.co.kr/news/read?newsId=01331686622587320&mediaCodeNo=257>, accessed January 4, 2021.

15 *NewsOne*. 2020. "국가열등감에 빠져있던 한국, 우린 선진국이야?" (Koreans Suffering from National Inferiority Now Ask, Korea is Now an Advanced Nation, Isn't It?). May 8, <http://newsone.co.kr/?p=20558>, accessed January 4, 2021; *TBS News*. 2020. "더 뉴요커 '한국인들 선진국임에 놀라'...TBS 김어준 뉴스공장 언급하기도" (*The New Yorker*: Koreans Are Surprised to 'Learn Korea as an Advanced Nation' ... TBS's Kim Eojun Cites). April 17, [http://tbs.seoul.kr/news/newsView.do?typ\\_800=4&idx\\_800=2391506&seq\\_800=10385611](http://tbs.seoul.kr/news/newsView.do?typ_800=4&idx_800=2391506&seq_800=10385611), accessed January 4, 2021.

16 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. "아베, 한국을 2015년으로 되돌리려 해... '타협적 화해'는 위험" (Abe Trying to Take Korea Back to 2015 ... A Compromising Reconciliation is Dangerous). August 14, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/diplomacy/905667.html>, accessed January 5, 2021.

government, nor the Korean grassroots, stepped back, but confronted Japan, saying, “We will never be defeated by Japan again!,” which President Moon first stated, and which became a popular slogan among the grassroots.<sup>17</sup> I contend that this is not a top-down slogan, but a bottom-up, when considering recent political movements such as the *Candlelight Revolution 2016–2017* (see Chapter 6). Koreans are aware of the power of the Japanese economy; however, they were willing to protest against Japan and establish a new order. Koreans did not want to accept Prime Minister Abe’s efforts to discipline Korea and get away without compensating the wartime labourers.

Instead of regretting and apologizing for the imperial invasion of Korea in the past, Japan is imposing economic sanctions on Korea. This is no less than a second invasion of Korea. Going against the current flow of peaceful relationships in East Asia, Japan is arming itself with military power. It transpired that Japan is attempting to discipline Korea as an inferior economy and military partner (People’s Solidarity for Social Progress, Gwangju).<sup>18</sup>

As of late 2021, Korea had the fourth largest GDP in Asia after China, Japan, and India, and the tenth largest in the world. However, Japan could still not overcome its superiority complex against Korea, and Japanese imperialism persists. Japan has become conscious of Korea’s increasingly influential economy and power in the international community. According to a Japanese expert on Korea, Professor Kimura Kan at Kobe University,

In Japan, there is an increasing perception of Korea as a competing nation. Those Japanese who had a superiority complex over Korea are unable to accept this. Japanese support for Abe’s trade provocation is based on their desire to have confirmed that “Japan is much stronger than Korea.”<sup>19</sup>

17 *News 1*. 2019. “다시는 일본에 절대 지지 않겠다” (We Will Never Be Defeated by Japan Again). August 14, <https://www.news1.kr/photos/details/?3777878>, accessed January 5, 2021.

18 *Jeonnam Ilbo*. 2019. “‘화이트 리스트 제외’ 들끓는 민심, 광장서 폭발할까” (Japan’s De-Whitelisting of Korea—Angering Korean Grassroots Which May Explode in a Mass Protest). August 4, <https://jnilbo.com/view/media/view?code=2019080417351034735>, accessed January 5, 2021.

19 *Hanguk Kyungje*. 2019. “극우 아베 물러나도 韓·日문제 해결 안돼...더 ‘먼 나라’ 될 수도” (Even After Departure of Abe, an Extreme Right Winger, Korea-Japan Issue May Not Get Resolved or Even Get Worse). *Hanguk Kyungje*, August 13, <https://www.hankyung.com/politics/article/2019081326731>, accessed January 6, 2021.

Koreans considered Abe's trade provocation as attempting to collapse Korea's major, as well as future industries, and as a proven continuity of Japanese imperialism over Korea. Abe's goal was to see the "Korean economy kneel in front of the Japanese economy."<sup>20</sup> According to Chun Woo-Yong, a historian, central to Abe's trade provocation was Japan's intention to return to militarism eventually and to humiliate the Korean government, taking advantage of anti-Korean sentiment in Japan.<sup>21</sup> A Korean reporter based in Japan revealed a reputable Korean politician's first-ever encounter with a Japanese bureaucrat of foreign affairs,

The Japanese bureaucrat argued that Japan is a politically advanced society with mature democracy and Korea is a politically underdeveloped society under authoritarianism. The Korean politician was also told about the resolution of the current conflict between Korea and Japan that "Do not ask Japan about how Korea and Japan can come up with a solution, but Korea should come back to the negotiation table with a right resolution."<sup>22</sup>

The Japanese suggestion was so condescending and arrogant, suggesting that Korea and Japan cannot negotiate a solution on an equal footing. Korean grassroots could not accept Japan's approach and instead started the boycott. In this process, some Koreans became further politically aware, and others became newly conscious political actors—i.e., changing from primary agents to social (corporate) agents.

### **No Buy, Sell, Visit, Eat, Ride or Speak Japanese Products**

In recent decades, Japanese products have flooded into the Korean market and have become part of everyday Korean consumption. A news reporter observed the products she comes across in a day: they included Japanese hand soap for children's use, two out of three pens in her office are made by Mitsubishi (a war crime-committed company), a spray medicine to relieve

20 *Choongcheong Today*. 2019. "냉철한 지혜와 단합된 국민의지로 돌파하자" (Let Us Overcome with Wisdom and the Nation's Unity). August 4, <http://www.cctoday.co.kr/news/articleViewAmp.html?idxno=2016506>, accessed January 6, 2021.

21 *YTN Radio*. 2019. "전우용, 주옥순 대표 발언...역사공부 30년 넘게 이런 경우 못 봤어" (Chun Woo-Yong Finds Joo Ok-Soon's Comments Extremely Unusual in 30 Years)." August 7, [https://www.ytn.co.kr/\\_ln/0101\\_201908081049119961](https://www.ytn.co.kr/_ln/0101_201908081049119961), accessed January 7, 2021.

22 *Joongang Ilbo*. 2020. "아베 앞에 알아서 기는 日 관료들...그들은 '호모 손타쿠스'" (Japanese Bureaucrats Take Submissive Attitudes to Abe Shinzo). February 3, <https://news.join.com/article/23696070>, accessed January 7, 2021.

pain in her mouth due to a cut, and Asahi beer.<sup>23</sup> Asahi beer has been the most popular beer in Korea for the last ten years and 45.3 per cent of the beer consumed in Korea is imported from Japan.<sup>24</sup> Koreans generally distinguish Japan’s invasion of Korea in the past from their use of Japanese products. However, a large proportion of Koreans was determined to live without their many familiar Japanese products in pursuit of economic independence. Korean grassroots launched a national boycott against Japanese products, deploying diverse methods, e.g., “5 Nos Movement”: No buying or selling Japanese products, No going to Japan, No riding Japanese vehicles, and No wearing Japanese clothes.

In June 2019, 3,946 Japanese cars were sold, but by July 2019 sales had reduced to 2,674, which is a 32.2 per cent reduction.<sup>25</sup> Sales again reduced in October 2019 to 1,977, which was a 58.4 per cent reduction in comparison to October 2018. As of October 2019, Japanese export of foods and drinks to Korea was reduced by 58.1 per cent, chemical products by 28.3 per cent, motor vehicles by 70.7 per cent, and beer by 99.9 per cent—compared to the exports from January to October 2018. A large amount of beer in stock passed its use-by dates and was returned to the distributor for destruction. Since June 2005, Korea has been the third most important export market for Japan, but the boycott pushed Korea to the fourth.<sup>26,27</sup> Nissan Motor withdrew from the Korean market after sixteen years of operation.<sup>28</sup> A large number of shop owners throughout the country decided to remove or not sell Japanese products. For example, 5,000 members of the association

23 *Donga Ilbo*. 2019. “24시간 일상 속 일본 제품 관찰기” (An Observation of Japanese Products in Our Everyday Life). August 10, <https://www.donga.com/news/Economy/article/all/20190810/96909848/1>, accessed January 7, 2021.

24 *e-Daily*. 2020. “지난해 日맥주 수입량 ‘반토막’...韓수제맥주가 빈자리 차지” (Import of Japanese Beer Halved Last Year... Korean Beer Becomes an Alternative). *e-Daily*, January 23, <https://www.edaily.co.kr/news/read?newsId=01308726625640672>, accessed January 7, 2021.

25 *Digital Times*. 2019. “세계 시장에서 ‘쌍쌍’ 일본차...한국서는 ‘찬밥’ 신세” (Japanese Vehicles Popular in the Globe, Not in Korea). *Digital Times*, August 8, [http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article\\_no=2019080802109932052006](http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article_no=2019080802109932052006), accessed January 8, 2021.

26 *Money Today*. 2020. “아무도 안 사니 결국 전량 폐기...일상이 된 日맥주 불매” (Japanese Beer Destroyed Due to No Demand). August 15, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2020081415452916188>, accessed January 14, 2021.

27 *Daily Hankook*. “10월 일본 수입맥주 작년보다 99% 감소, 日수출대상국 한국 3위→4위” (Import of Japanese Beer 99% Reduced... Korea Shifts from 3rd to 4th Place for Japan’s Export Market). December 6, <http://daily.hankooki.com/lpage/industry/201912/dh20191206111349147950.htm>, accessed January 8, 2021.

28 *BusinessKorea*. 2020. “Nissan to Withdraw from Korean Market after 16 Years of Operation. *BusinessKorea*.” May 29, <http://www.businesskorea.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=46627>, accessed January 8, 2021.



of traditional shops, consisting of twenty-two markets located in Suwon City, joined the boycott to not buy nor sell Japanese products. Some of those twenty-two markets placed a banner—"Boycott Japan: Let us Not Go, Eat, Buy or Sell."<sup>29</sup> Online shopping sites recorded lower rates of search or sale of Japanese products. For example, 11Street Korea (11번가) saw a 30 per cent decrease in the sale of Nintendo Games (from July 7 to August 6, 2019), a 45 per cent decrease in the internet search of UniQlo clothes (from June to July 2019), and a 43 per cent decrease in an internet search of UL-OS, which are Japanese cosmetic products. SSG.COM, a prestigious internet department store of Shinsegae, saw a 12 per cent decrease in the sale of Japanese golf products by Honma and Xxio.<sup>30</sup>

Many Koreans gave up their travel to Japan and those who had pre-booked tickets mostly cancelled. Moreover, in the collective cultural context, Koreans are very conscious of what their friends think of their activities. Paying the cancellation fee is not pleasant; however, they did not want to proceed with their planned trip to Japan, as it would not be an enjoyable trip if they were unable to openly talk about their travel with others.<sup>31</sup> Those who cancelled often took a photo of the cancellation proof and shared it through their social networking sites, which demonstrates solidarity and has a "policing effect" within each social network. Some proceeded with their planned trip since they could not afford the heavy penalties.<sup>32</sup> Travel agencies noted that new bookings for travel to Japan decreased by 50 to 70 per cent, and the cancellation rates of travel bookings to Japan ranged from 50 per cent to 400 per cent.<sup>33</sup> Before the trade provocation, 69.4 per cent of Koreans were willing to travel to Japan, but with the trade provocation,

29 *Maeil Kyungje*. 2019. "지방서도 일본 제품 불매 운동 격화" (Boycotting Japanese Products Become Heated in Regional Areas as Well). *Maeil Kyungje*, August 6, <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/society/view/2019/08/602344/>, accessed January 8, 2021; *Kyunggi Ilbo*. 2019. "수원 전통시장 상인들, 일본제품 사지도, 팔지도 않겠다" (Shop Owners in a Traditional Market, We Won't Buy Or Sell Japanese Products). *Kyunggi Ilbo*, August 6, <http://www.kyeonggi.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=2143991>, accessed January 8, 2021.

30 *Seoul Kyungje*. 2019. "닌텐도, 군 기저귀도... 쉽게 못 끊는 취미·육아용품도 반일" (Nintendo, Japanese Products for Hobby and Infants, All Boycotted). August 11, <https://sedaily.com/NewsView/1VMXGCA71I>, accessed January 8, 2021.

31 *Segye Ilbo*. 2019. "카드 이용액 감소 뚜렷...일본 가는 여행객 확실히 줄었다" (A Clear Decrease in the Credit Card Usage with the Reduced Travellers to Japan). *Segye Ilbo*, August 8, <http://m.segye.com/view/20190808507241>, accessed January 11, 2021.

32 *Digital Times*. 2018. "수수료 때문에...일본 여행 예약자들 전전긍긍" (Due to Penalties, Travellers to Japan Are Lost). *Digital Times*, August 22, [http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article\\_no=2019082202109932052007](http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article_no=2019082202109932052007), accessed January 11, 2021.

33 *Digital Times*. 2019. "노 재팬 쇼크 일파만파...日式료품·여행 매출 뚝" (Big Impact of No Japan Shock...the Sale of Japanese Food and Travel Products Collapses). *Digital Times*, July 21,

this figure decreased to 16.2 per cent. On the other hand, 28.1 per cent of Koreans were not interested in travelling to Japan before the trade dispute and this figure increased to 81.3 per cent.<sup>34</sup>

Cancellation of the booked trips was exacerbated by domestic travel agents who offered discounted prices for domestic travel when the customers presented proof of cancellation of trips to Japan. For example, Ulleungdo, Dokdo, and Gyeongju were some of the popular domestic destinations to attract a discount on travel costs for those who cancelled their travel to Japan.<sup>35</sup> In July and August 2019, Gyeongju had a 202 per cent increase in the number of visitors compared to the same period in 2018 (50,394 to 152,216).<sup>36</sup> Eight hundred and fifteen such travel products were introduced to commemorate the Independence date of August 15. Some accommodations offered a discount of 50 to 75 per cent.<sup>37</sup> The cancellation of the trips to Japan led to large profit reductions for tour companies, many of which were also hit by COVID-19, and some eventually collapsed.<sup>38</sup> Instead of Japan, South East Asian countries (especially Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia) and Taiwan became popular destinations for overseas holidays.<sup>39</sup>

As part of the boycott, some petrol and service stations refused to serve Japanese cars. Some delivery staff agreed not to deliver Japanese products such as UniQlo products.<sup>40</sup> The planned screening of Japanese films was put off (e.g., "Doraemon: Nobita's Chronicle of the Moon Exploration") and the films that

[http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article\\_no=2019072202101032060001](http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article_no=2019072202101032060001), accessed January 11, 2021.

34 *YTN News*. 2019. "日 여행 생각없다 81%...있었지만 철회 56%" (Not Interested in Travelling to Japan...Was Interested, but Withdrawn 56%). August 4, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EpU8T3hMlg>, accessed January 11, 2021.

35 *Kookmin Ilbo*. 2019. "들불처럼 번지는 지자체의 '노 재팬' 운동, 불매·지명 지우기..." (A Spread Like a Wild Fire: No Japan Movement, Boycott and Removing Japanese Names of District Names). July 31, <http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0924090942&code=11131100&sid1=prj>, accessed January 11, 2021.

36 *Segye Ilbo*. 2019. "경주엑스포 7~8월 관광객 작년 대비 3배 꺾춤" (Gyeongju Expo in July/August, 3 Times More Tourists). August 28, <http://www.segye.com/newsView/20190827506832?OutUrl=google>, accessed January 12, 2021.

37 *YTN News*. 2019. "여행업계, '노 재팬' 고객에 할인 혜택 제공." July 31, [https://www.ytn.co.kr/\\_ln/0102\\_201907310958474802\\_](https://www.ytn.co.kr/_ln/0102_201907310958474802_), accessed January 12, 2021.

38 *Asia Kyungje*. 2019. "제2의 8.15 광복, 우리가 마무리, SNS 타고 들불처럼 번지는 반일 운동." August 5, <https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2019080510461444270>, accessed January 11, 2021.

39 *Digital Times*. 2019. "日 대체노선 통했다...불매운동 딛고 3분기 항공여객 역대 최고치." October 29, [http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article\\_no=2019102902109932052009](http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article_no=2019102902109932052009), accessed January 11, 2021.

40 *KBS News*. 2019. "일본차 정비·주유 거부까지...확산일로 불매운동 어디까지 합법?" (No Petrol or Service for Japanese Vehicles...Is It Legal?). July 30, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eFH-gCQS5c>, accessed January 12, 2021.

were screening did not attract the expected audience numbers, e.g., Korean parents discouraged their children from watching the children's movie "Butt Detective The Movie." These incidents reflected the social circumstances and people's sentiment during the boycott, contended film experts. In contrast, "Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of Comfort Women Issue" had an unusual success for a documentary reaching an audience of 10,000 within a week of opening.<sup>41</sup> However, Jecheon International Music & Film Festival 2019 proceeded with the original inclusion of seven Japanese films after strong opposition based on Abe's trade provocation. Jecheon City Mayor's view prevailed that the seven films were not politically motivated, but purely artworks and that the festival is for people's cultural exchanges, which should continue despite political conflicts.<sup>42</sup> The "No Japan, No Abe" movement also spread to overseas Korean communities, such as those in Hochiminh and London.<sup>43</sup>

Boycott participants were not only pursuing "economic revenge" but also seeking to rectify the "wrong" history or stop its continuity. For example, Gwangju City found sixty-five historical monuments, building signboards, school hymns, and military facilities had their origins to do with Japanese collaborators, and forthwith the city authority will publicly specify those with pro-Japanese origins.<sup>44</sup> Kim Jeong-Woo, a member of the Korean Assembly, found that national institutes such as Korea Investment Corporation invested \$463.4 million into Japanese war crime-committed companies as of August 2019 and Korean Public Procurement Service spent \$909.8 million over 219,244 contracts, purchasing products from war crime-committed companies for the last ten years. Kim argued that these investments and purchases were not appropriate when 7.5 million Koreans suffered from forced labour by those war crime-committed companies during the colonial period.<sup>45</sup>

41 *Yonhap News*. 2019. "[한일 경제전쟁] 극장가도 '노 재팬'... '도라에몽'도 쓰러졌다" ('No Japan' Affects Film Industries...Doraemon Falls Over)." August 2, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20190802138100005>, accessed, January 12, 2021.

42 *Financial News*. 2019. "이상천 제천시장이 옳다." August 8, <https://www.fnnews.com/news/201908071740520883>, accessed, January 13, 2021.

43 *Aju Kyungje*. 2019. "베트남서도 日불매운동...아세안서 한국이 日 압도한 유일한 나라." August 5, <https://www.ajunews.com/view/20190805141457644>, accessed, January 13, 2021; *Yonhap News*. 2019. "해외서도 '노 재팬'...런던 한인들, 의사당 인근서 日 규탄 집회." August 13, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20190813001500085>, accessed, January 13, 2021.

44 *Kookmin Ilbo*. 2019. "들불처럼 번지는 지자체의 '노 재팬' 운동, 불매·지명 지우기..." (A Spread Like a Wild Fire: No Japan Movement, Boycott and Removing Japanese Names of District Names). July 31, <http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0924090942&code=11131100&sid1=prj>, accessed January 11, 2021.

45 *Joongboo Ilbo*. 2019. "경기 국회의원들, 일본 전범기업 관련 법안 잇따라 발의" (Congress Members from Kyunggi-do Province, Legislation to Question Japanese War Crime Companies).

UniQlo is a popular Japanese clothing brand with 187 branch shops in Korea. It started trading in Korea in September 2005. The business lost \$1.2m in its first twelve months of operation in Korea, however, sales reached \$1.1169 billion by 2014.<sup>46</sup> In response to the boycott, the sale of products was decreasing in July 2019, but Mr. Okazaki, Chief Financial Officer from UniQlo's headquarters in Japan claimed that "the [Korean] boycott will not influence the sale in the long run." This angered Korean netizens who interpreted the comment "to underestimate the Korean customers." The boycott against UniQlo accelerated and the profit for the period (September 2019 to August 2020) was reduced by 44 per cent compared to the previous twelve months. The reduction in both sales and profits occurred for the first time in seventeen years.<sup>47</sup> UniQlo's flagship store, the Myeongdong franchise, was set to close its business on January 31, 2021.<sup>48</sup> Since July 2019, the Myeongdong shop has been a focal point of anti-Japan sentiment and some activists have filmed the shop entrance, discouraging shoppers from entering. By the end of November 2020, due to the boycott and COVID-19, twenty-two UniQlo shops in Korea had ceased operations.<sup>49</sup>

I contend that the boycott of Japan was a manifestation of the intersection of grassroots ethnic as well as economic protests. Korea had a current account balance deficit (goods and services) of \$24.7 billion from the trade with Japan in 2018 and this decreased to \$18.82 billion in 2019. Especially the deficit from reduced goods, including the types of equipment to produce semiconductors, was reduced from \$17.26 billion in 2018 to \$13.41 billion in 2019.<sup>50</sup>

August 11, <http://www.joongboo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1378087>, accessed, January 13, 2021.

46 *Chosun Ilbo*. 2015. "유니클로, 한국 진출 10년 만에 年매출 1조 돌파" (UniQlo, Reaching \$1 Billion Sale in 10 Years Operation). *Chosun Ilbo*, December 1, [https://biz.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2015/11/30/2015113003730.html](https://biz.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2015/11/30/2015113003730.html), accessed January 14, 2021.

47 *Joongang Ilbo*. 2019. "韓 불매운동 오래 못간다던 유니클로 '대단히 죄송'" (UniQlo Once Ridiculing the Korean Boycott, 'Now Very Sorry'). July 17, <https://news.joins.com/article/23527409>, accessed January 14, 2021.

48 *Maeil Kyungje*. 2020. "유니클로 명동중앙점 내년 1월 폐점...운영사는 매출 반토막" (UniQlo Myeongdong Shop to Close in January...the Company's Sale Halved). December 5, 2020, <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/business/view/2020/12/1250863/>, accessed January 14, 2021.

49 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2020. "개업날 20억 매출, 유니클로 명동중앙점도 문 닫는다" (Once Flourishing, UniQlo to Close the Myeongdong Shop). December 4, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/economy/consumer/972809.html>, accessed January 14, 2021.

50 *Kookje Sinmun*. 2020. "지난해 대중국 경상 흑자 반토막, 일본 수출 규제로 대일 적자는 감소" (Current Account Balance Profit from China Halved, But the Deficit from Japan Decreased)." June 22, <http://www.kookje.co.kr/news2011/asp/newsbody.asp?code=0200&key=20200623.22011007964>, accessed January 14, 2021.

### *Political Cultures in Korea and Japan Today*

With the instigation and progression of the boycott, what were the emerging political cultures in Korea and Japan, as perceived by the Korean grassroots and reported in the Korean media? What were the cultures resulting from the history, and also the contemporary influential and emergent cultures? Undoubtedly, throughout their school education, Koreans were reminded of Japan's egregiousness against Koreans during the colonial period. All contemporary Koreans know this history. However, in recent decades Korea and Japan have maintained peaceful relationships, which have been underpinned by close and interdependent economies. However, the issue of forced labour under the war crime-committed companies has continued to adversely affect the friendly relationships at all levels—economic, diplomatic, and cultural. When conflicts occur, the suppressed anti-Japan sentiment resurfaces. Ihm Woon-Taek, a sociologist, argues that Japan has not apologized for its past misdeeds and the recent de-whitelisting of Korea from Japan's favourite trade nations hurt Korean self-esteem.<sup>51</sup> Diverse ideas emerged to combat the conflicts. As noted, one of the catch-phrases was, "We will never be defeated by Japan again!" This manifests the combination of the past and contemporary animosity towards Japan. President Moon Jae-In used this phrase initially and firmed up Korean determination to boycott Japan. Other sentiments shared on social networking sites were as follows:

As we want to win against Japan, we are willing to persevere the similar economic struggles that we went through during the IMF's restructuring of the Korean economy in the late 1990s. ... This is a major task that our ancestors left with us and we have to accomplish the mission and gain the Second Independence. ... I couldn't participate in the independence movement during the colonial time, but I join the boycott.<sup>52</sup>

Contemporary Koreans are full of pride that they have accomplished a miraculous and compressed economic development, known as the "Miracle of Hangang River"; however, they are strongly reminded by a respected independence activist and historian Shin Chae-Ho that "there is no future

51 *Asia Kyungje*. 2019. "제2의 8.15 광복, 우리가 마무리, SNS 타고 들불처럼 번지는 반일 운동" (We Will Complete the Second Independence: Anti-Japan Movement Like Wild Fire through SNS). August 5, <https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2019080510461444270>, accessed January 11, 2021.

52 *Asia Kyungje*. 2019. "제2의 8.15 광복, 우리가 마무리, SNS 타고 들불처럼 번지는 반일 운동." *Asia Kyungje*, August 5.

for the people of a nation that lost its history" in his book, *Ancient History of Joseon*. Thus Koreans have their history, and the experience of Japanese imperialism in particular, deeply ingrained in their psyche. A cultural artist is puzzled by the high volume of the sale of "Animal Forest," a Nintendo Game, and argues that "true" independence from Japan is yet to be achieved.<sup>53</sup> This kind of reminder through the media not only indicates the present status of the Korean psyche against Japan but also reinforces Koreans as historically conscious. This process is a continuing intersection between the shame in the past, and the confidence at present, the latter of which has been enabled by the emergent political and economic prominence of Korea.

The level of financial damage caused to Japan may not have been as high as the Koreans intended. However, some Japanese industries and regions felt its impact. On August 19, 2019, a few officers from Hokkaido Prefecture stood at the airport arrival holding a banner, "Welcome to Hokkaido" in Korean, which was repeated several times. At the Okinawa Airport, a few tour industries hosted the ceremonies to welcome and see off foreign tourists. Simoji Yoshiro, President of Okinawa Convention & Visitors Bureau announced that "despite the deteriorating Korea-Japan relations, the tourists to Okinawa will be respected."<sup>54</sup> However, there is also a portion of Japanese with strong anti-Korean sentiments. A Korean professor who has lived in Japan says that "Japanese are most irritated about Koreans these days in my 15 years in Japan." Former diplomat of Korea also noted, after attending a recent conference in Tokyo, that "it would be difficult to revert to the friendly Korea-Japan relationship by any means. My Japanese acquaintances that I had friendly relations with for decades have changed. I could feel the whole atmosphere in the conference was different."<sup>55</sup> A Korean employee of a Korean corporation in Tokyo had a Japanese acquaintance whom he had met for a drink for more than fifteen years: "The Japanese acquaintance does not initiate the meeting anymore for the last three months. I can't contact him as he is avoiding me." In another case, he was informed that his business lunch appointment with a Japanese person from

53 *Maeil Sinmun*. 2020. "[매일춘추] 닌텐도 스위치와 이상화" (Nintendo Switch and Lee Sang-Hwa). April 27, <http://news.imaail.com/OuterColumn/2020042710124370287>, accessed January 15, 2021.

54 *Asia Kyungje*. 2019. "노 재팬, 韓관광객 감소에 급했다... 지자체, '환영합니다' 현수막 동원" (Japan's Reaction to the Reduction of Korean Travellers... a Local Government's Welcome). August 30, <https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2019083019342800733>, accessed January 16, 2021.

55 *Joongang Ilbo*. "자발적 불매운동 나선 한국인, 조용히 한국친구 끊는 일본인" (Koreans' Voluntary Participation in the Boycott, Japanese Silently Quit Korean friends). August 6, <https://news.joins.com/article/23545005>, accessed January 25, 2021.

a local company was cancelled, saying that he felt it was burdensome to lunch with a Korean under the current climate.<sup>56</sup> According to a survey undertaken by *Fuji TV* and *Sankei News* on August 3–4, 2019, 67 per cent of Japanese supported Abe's de-whitelisting of South Korea and 19.4 per cent did not.<sup>57</sup> Seo Seung-Uk, a Tokyo-based reporter of *Joongang Ilbo* noted that the current status of anti-Korean sentiment in the Japanese Social Networking sites is serious. As there is "NO Abe" movement in Korea, there is "NO Moon Jae-In" movement in Japan. Seo cited a reputable nonfiction writer, saying that "current anti-Korean sentiment is much similar to Japan's slogan in the 1930s and 1940s—'Let us get rid of China as well as the United States that supports China.'" Seo aptly points out that the crux of the problems is not necessarily the conflict between the political leaders of Korea and Japan, but the people from both nations are crossing the bridge of no return.<sup>58</sup> This potentially hurts "people diplomacy."

### *No Abe, Yes Japan*

Just as there is strong anti-Korean sentiment in Japan, so there is anti-Japan sentiment in Korea. The suppressed anti-Japan sentiment could not find a better time to resurface than with Abe's trade provocation. The anti-Japan sentiment is a prevalent culture for Koreans and is carefully managed, concealed, or emergent depending upon the characteristics of diplomatic relationships between Korea and Japan.

In the enaction to Abe's trade provocation on July 1, 2019, Korean grassroots reacted throughout the whole nation. For example, many local governments felt pressured to go along with the grassroots actions. *Minjung Party*<sup>59</sup> in Ulsan City and many local citizens against Abe Shinzo made financial contributions to produce 130 banners—"No Abe; Japanese Collaborators Out," which were each 70cm in width x 120cm in length. The banners were displayed at regular intervals along the two streets—respectively 1.3km and 0.25km long. The activists called the streets "No Abe Streets."<sup>60</sup> Similar banners were displayed throughout the nation. Also in front of the Whale Museum in Ulsan City, there

56 *Joongang Ilbo*. "자발적 불매운동 나선 한국인, 조용히 한국친구 끊는 일본인."

57 *Joongang Ilbo*. "자발적 불매운동 나선 한국인, 조용히 한국친구 끊는 일본인."

58 Seo Seung-Uk. 2019. "[글로벌 아이] 일본 태풍과 때아닌 라면 논쟁" (Japanese Typhoon and an Unexpected Debate on Ramyeon). *Joongang Ilbo* October 15. <https://news.joins.com/article/23603871>, accessed January 25, 2021.

59 On June 20, 2020, *Minjungdang* was Renamed *Jinbodang* (Progressive Party).

60 *Kyungsang Ilbo*. 2019. "울산지역 일본 불매운동 확산...동구에, NO 아베 거리" (Spread of Boycotting Japan in Ulsan... No Abe Street in the Eastern District). June 1, <http://ksilbo.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=710195>, accessed January 26, 2021.

stood a banner, “August Special Price of a Sea Trip for Japanese: Only \$8,150,” the price of which originated from August 15, the Korean independence day. This banner is to protest against Abe, however, Japanese customers were actually free of charge although its normal charge was \$20.<sup>61</sup>

Every Korean province and their cities have established sister relations with their many counterparts in Japan for regular exchange programmes. For example, Gyeongsang-Namdo Province and its cities have twenty-two such sister cities in Japan.<sup>62</sup> Choongcheong-Namdo Province’s Seosan City and Nara Prefecture’s Tenri City have maintained sister relationships since 1991. Seosan City informed its counterpart Tenri City of the cancellation of welcoming a group of visiting students from the City.<sup>63</sup> However, Goseong Town Youth Exchange Programme went ahead with its pre-planned invitation of Japanese students.<sup>64</sup> Yet, all the sister city relationships between Korea and Japan came under severe pressure and many suspended their exchange programmes. Amid troubled Korea-Japan relationships, many local governments explored new sister cities in China.<sup>65</sup> Korea-Japan sports exchanges were also cancelled. Chuncheon City Hall’s Women’s Curling Team cancelled its participation in the 2019 Hokkaido Bank Curling Classic scheduled to take place on August 1–4 in Sapporo, Japan.<sup>66</sup> Gangreung City was planning a friendly game of Curling on August 16–18, inviting China and Japan, at the time of the trade dispute between Korea and Japan.<sup>67</sup> The

61 *Money Today*. 2019. “노(NO) 아베 거리에, ‘일본인 요금 815만원’ 현수막도...” (\$8,500, an Admission Charge for Japanese—A Banner in the Street of No Abe). August 2, [https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019080213454024529&MRH\\_P](https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019080213454024529&MRH_P), accessed January 27, 2021.

62 *Gyeongnam Domin Ilbo*. 2019. “자매도시 어찌할꼬 고민에 빠진 지자체” (Local Governments under a Torment Regarding Their Sister Cities). July 26, <https://www.idomin.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=703742>, accessed January 27, 2021.

63 *Money Today*. 2019. “[日, 경제도발]日 언론, 한 달새 35건 한일교류 중단” (Japanese News: 35 Korea-Japan Exchanges Halted in a Month). August 2, <https://news.mt.co.kr/hotview.php?no=2019080215423240164&type=1&sec=O&hid=201908021731472936&hcnt=69&vgb=hot>, accessed January 27, 2021.

64 *Gyeongnam Domin Ilbo*. “자매도시 어찌할꼬 고민에 빠진 지자체.” July 26, <https://www.idomin.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=703742>, accessed January 27, 2021.

65 *Segye Ilbo*. 2019. “충남도, 중국 지린성과 자매결연 체결” (Choongcheong Namdo, Signing a Sister Relationship with Jilin Sheng, China). August 22, <http://www.segye.com/newsView/20190821513790?OutUrl=google>, accessed January 27, 2021.

66 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. “전국 시민, 사회단체, 지자체 등 일본 경제 도발에 강력 대응” (Citizens, Social Organizations, Local Governments Strongly React against the Japanese Economic Provocation). August 4, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/area/yeongnam/904440.html>, accessed January 27, 2021.

67 *Gangwon Domin Ilbo*. 2019. “체육계부터 맘카페까지 ‘NO 재팬’ 확산” (Sport Clubs and Mum’s Internet Cafes All Join ‘No Japan’ Movement). August 7, <http://www.kado.net/news/articleView.html?idxno=981654>, accessed January 27, 2021.



City initially noted the non-payment of honorarium for the participation of the Japanese team, but later completely withdrew the invitation to the Japanese team.<sup>68</sup> Deteriorating cultural and sports exchange programmes such as these raised significant concerns at all levels. Yi Hae-Chan, the leader of the Democratic Party of Korea contended that sports exchanges between Korea and Japan have to continue despite the trade dispute.<sup>69</sup>

Some local governments took an initiative in the “No Japan, No Abe” campaign especially among the civil servants in the office, arguing that this was the time for all Koreans to demonstrate a united force against Japan.<sup>70</sup> However, grassroots reacted against central or local government’s involvement in the boycott. Seoul’s Junggu district office decided to display 1,100 banners on the major streets of Myeongdong, Euljiro, and Namsan, which attract a large number of tourists. The grassroots, shop owners in the district, and social commentators protested against the “No Japan” banners on the streets as the workers were displaying the banners. A petition against the banners appeared in the President’s Bulletin Board. The grassroots protesters provided the following responses to the local government’s plan for the banners, on social networking sites:

The banners will upset Japanese tourists and create the misleading impression that the boycott is government-led. ... The business of boycotts should be left to the people and any government’s intervention in the movement will tarnish its essence. ... The banners in the middle of downtown will speed up the deterioration of the Korea-Japan relationships. ... It will end up producing more Japanese to support Abe’s trade provocation. Creating the image of the government’s partaking in the people’s voluntary boycott will negatively influence the image of South Korea in the international community. ... We have no intention to destroy the Korea-Japan relationships and the District office must stop displaying the banners.<sup>71</sup>

68 *Yonhap News*. 2019. “한일관계 악화에...강릉 컬링친선전서 일본 제외” (Korea-Japan Relationship Deteriorates...Gangreung Friendly Curling Games to Exclude Japan). 5 August, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20190805128100007>, accessed January 28, 2021.

69 *Seoul Kyungje*. 2019. “노 재팬 대신 노 아베, 與, 反日공세 수위조절” (No Abe Instead of No Japan, the Leading Party Adjusts the Wording). August 8, <https://www.sedaily.com/NewsView/1VMW2YLFMH>, accessed January 28, 2021.

70 *Chosun Ilbo*. 2019. “서울 도심에 ‘No재팬’ 깃발 내건 중구청, 관제 반일 논란’ 커지자 뒤늦게 철거” (“No Japan” Banners in the Centre of Seoul: A Bureaucratic Influence Accused and the Banners Removed). August 6, [https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2019/08/06/2019080601147.html](https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2019/08/06/2019080601147.html), accessed January 28, 2021.

71 *Kookmin Ilbo*. “명동에 ‘노 재팬’ 깃발 걸겠다는 중구... 시민들 “오버 말라” 질타” (Citizens Accuse the Local Government Wishing to Display “No Japan” Banners). August 6, <http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0013573865>, accessed January 28, 2021.

Observing the banner incident, Park Jeong-Hun (29-years-old), a salaryman, mentioned that the District office had gone too far and the citizens were well managing the boycott process. Others said that the District officials did not know what they are doing, that it would only make small shop owners the losers (Kim Sang-Hyun, 34-years-old), and that there was nothing to gain by treating Japanese visitors badly (Mr. Lee, 25-years-old).<sup>72</sup> In brief, the citizens said, “We will do the fighting, and the government must stand aside.”<sup>73</sup> Despite some supportive voices to support the display of “No Japan” banners, the prevailing view was not to display the banners in those streets of Seoul and the banner project failed.<sup>74</sup>

Seoul Metro Union produced and displayed posters in the Seoul Subway Trains, condemning Japan’s distortion of Korean history, Abe’s trade provocation, and disturbance of the peace process in the Korean peninsula.<sup>75</sup> Numerous bus drivers in Daegu City displayed this poster in the buses—“No Japan, Boycott Japan,” thinking that this was the minimum they would like to engage individually in the protest against Abe’s trade provocation. Public complaints against the sticker display were registered at the Daegu City government, which then wrote to twenty-six Bus Corporations and asked for the removal of the stickers. The randomly interviewed citizens, i.e., grassroots, then argued that the city authorities were concerned about the possibility of misrepresentation of the local government and the possible reduction of Japanese tourists to the city, however, that the drivers’ individual freedom of expression must not be tampered with.<sup>76</sup>

It is worth noting the level of maturity of the grassroots in terms of their approaches and attitudes to the boycott which demonstrated calculated nationalism. Following the Seoul Junggu district office’s withdrawal of “No

72 *Money Today*. 2019. “명동 한복판에 ‘노 재팬’ 깃발... ‘너무 나갔다’ vs ‘시의 적절’” (‘No Japan’ Banners in the Centre of Myeongdong: ‘Gone Too Far’ vs. ‘Appropriate’). August 6, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019080609124858931>, accessed January 28, 2021.

73 *Herald Kyungje*. 2019. “시민들 싸움은 우리가 할게요...지자체 ‘반일기류’에 자제 당부” (Citizens Say, We Will Do the Fighting, and the Local Government Please Stay Restrained). August 6, <http://news.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud=20190806000398>, accessed January 28, 2021.

74 *Chosun Ilbo*. 2019. “서울 도심에 ‘No재팬’ 깃발 내건 중구청, ‘관제 반일 논란’ 커지자 뒤늦게 철거” (The Local Government’s ‘No Japan’ Banners in the Middle of the District Now Removed Them Due to the Controversy Over the Bureaucratic Intervention).” August 6, [https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2019/08/06/2019080601147.html](https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2019/08/06/2019080601147.html), accessed January 29, 2021.

75 *Money Today*. “지하철에도 ‘NO재팬’ 스티커...일각에선 ‘도 넘었다’” (‘No Japan’ Stickers in the Subways... Some Argue, It’s Gone Too Far). August 1, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019080115350580641>, accessed January 28, 2021.

76 *MBC News*. 2019. “버스에 붙은 ‘노 재팬’ 논란...반일 범위 어디까지?” (Controversy Over ‘No Japan’ Stickers in the Buses... What Is the Appropriate Level of Protesting?). August 29, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUoKP\\_zJPbs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUoKP_zJPbs), accessed January 28, 2021.

Japan” banners, the People Diplomacy staff (within the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs) made a special welcome to ten Japanese students from Kaisei High School on August 6, 2019 under the Korea-Japan students’ exchange programmes organized by the Korean Embassy in Japan. Despite the tensions between the two countries, Koreans, whether from the governments or grassroots, strongly argued that Korea-Japan people’s diplomacy must stay strong. It is hoped that people’s diplomacy will help them understand each other’s culture and history, which could contribute to improving the overall Korea-Japan relationship.<sup>77</sup> According to *Money Today*, citizens reiterated the importance of people’s diplomacy and that there were plenty of Japanese tourists enjoying themselves in Myeongdong in early August 2019, and that Koreans must welcome them and continue to treat them with the best hospitality.<sup>78</sup> The grassroots have strongly rebuked local government offices for taking any serious roles in the boycott or discouraging any types of cultural, sports, and art exchange programmes.<sup>79</sup> It was heartening to learn that Suwon City and Asahikawa City honoured their thirty-year sister city relations and proceeded with their sixteenth friendly soccer match of primary and middle-school students in Suwon City on August 23–26, 2019.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, two soccer teams of Japanese children had friendly matches with local children in Gyeongju City on August 25, 2019. In addition to the presentation of souvenirs to the Japanese teams, Koreans prepared supportive banners for and cheered up the Japanese players on the ground. Yun Seok-Jun, one of those Koreans cheering up the Japanese team, recognized the invaluable

77 *Chosun Ilbo*. 2019. “한일戰 격화되는 와중에도...외교부 청사 찾은 디고교생들” (Some Japanese Students Visit the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Middle of Korea-Japan Conflict). August 6, [https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2019/08/06/2019080601959.html](https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2019/08/06/2019080601959.html), accessed January 29, 2021.

78 *Money Today*. 2019. “디 관광객 배척? 이런 때 일수록 더 환영해야” (Really the Time to Welcome the Japanese Tourists Rather Than Unwelcoming Them). August 7, [https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019080715370261134&type=2&sec=society&pDepth2=Stotal&MSC\\_T](https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019080715370261134&type=2&sec=society&pDepth2=Stotal&MSC_T), accessed January 29, 2021.

79 *Kookmin Ilbo*. 2019. “여행업계, 與에 쓴 소리 ‘한일 민간교류 막지 말라’” (Travel Industry Accuses the Leading Party and Asks Them Not to Interrupt People Diplomacy). August 7, <http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0013581056&code=61111511&sid1=i>, accessed January 29, 2021.

80 *Joongboo Ilbo*. 2019. “수원시, 디 아사히카와시 유소년 축구팀과 교류전 예정대로 개최” (Suwon City Proceeds the Boys’ Soccer Match with the Japanese Team from Asahikawa City). August 7, <http://www.joongboo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1377365>, accessed January 30, 2021; “한일 유소년 축구 교류전” (Korea-Japan Match of the Boys’ Soccer Teams). *Newsis*, August 24, 2019. [https://newsis.com/view/?id=NISI20190824\\_0015522452](https://newsis.com/view/?id=NISI20190824_0015522452), accessed January 30, 2021.

event, but could not give up “No Abe.”<sup>81</sup> People diplomacy such as this is possible due to mutual efforts from the grassroots in Korea as well as Japan.

A notable portion of the Japanese public was in solidarity with the Korean grassroots’ efforts. When the Statue of Peace was under threat from Japanese political leaders and extreme activists, peace movement activists were at the forefront of protecting the statue, demonstrating in the street and releasing a statement. A counter-response from Korea was, for instance, when a Japanese swimmer won a gold medal from Gwangju 2019 World Aquatics Championships, July 12–18, a Korean spectator turned to a Japanese visitor and congratulated them on the achievement. The visitor’s eyes were filled with tears.<sup>82</sup> According to *Munhwa Ilbo*, many of those Japanese tourists who came to Korea during this time as a response to overcome Abe’s trade provocation.<sup>83</sup> Those Koreans and Japanese in solidarity led the hashtag movement, exchanging “#Love\_Korea” and “#Love\_Japan.” A clear consensus between them was “No Abe, but Yes, Japan.”<sup>84</sup> Kim Ui-Young, a professor of political science and diplomacy rightly observed that ordinary Koreans participating in the boycott were well aware that they were not protesting against Japan or the Japanese, but against Prime Minister Abe and extremists. And Koreans boycotted Japanese products and travel to Japan but highly valued cultural and friendly exchange programmes with Japanese people.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, Korean grassroots were self-conscious of what they protested against, as well as told local and central governments not to intervene in the grassroots movement as the grassroots attempted to cultivate better relationships between Korea and Japan.<sup>86</sup> Political party

81 *Gyeongju Sinmun*. 2019. “일본 유소년축구단 올린 유석준씨” (Yu Seok-Jun in Support of the Japanese Boys’ Soccer Team). August 29. <http://m.gjnews.com/view.php?id=65670>, accessed January 30, 2021.

82 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. “평범한 한국과 일본 시민들, 더 많이 대화해야 한다” (Ordinary Korean and Japanese Citizens Ought to Converse More). August 9, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/entertainment/905230.html>, accessed February 1, 2021.

83 *Munhwa Ilbo*. 2019. “日 관광객마저 내쫓는 지자체” (Mad Local Governments Driving Away Japanese Tourists). August 9, <http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=2019080901071303025001>, accessed February 1, 2021.

84 *Hankook Ilbo*. 2019. “노 재팬 아닌 노 아베(NO ABE) 해야... 커지는 자성 목소리” (No Abe Rather Than No Japan: More Koreans Suggest the Way To Go). August 7, <http://www1.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201908071024752584?did=PA&dtype=3&dtypecode=2502>, accessed February 1, 2021.

85 *JoongAng Ilbo*. 2019. “[중앙시평] 일본 사람들의 마음을 사자” (Let Us Buy the Japanese Minds). August 9, 2019, <https://news.joins.com/article/23547724>, accessed February 1, 2021.

86 *KBS News*. “성숙하고 신중하게...도 넘은 반일에 균형 잡은 시민의 힘” (Mature and Cautious...Citizens Show Balanced Ways Against Reckless Ways). August 9, <https://mn.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=4259215>, accessed February 1, 2021.

leaders took positive approaches towards sports and cultural exchanges and travel to Japan,<sup>87</sup> toning down from “No Japan” to “No Abe.”<sup>88</sup> Social networking sites such as Facebook saw an exponential increase in messages to welcome and treat Japanese visitors well.<sup>89</sup>

The hashtag movement brought some Koreans and Japanese together in solidarity. A Japanese Twitter user uploaded several photos of Koreans campaigning to support the victims of the 2011 East Japan earthquake and argued that there is a good number of Japanese who appreciate Koreans and are in solidarity with them despite the Japanese government’s dislike of Korea. Others shared their memorable trips to Korea, for example, a few Koreans kindly guided them when s/he got lost a few times. Additionally, a group of Japanese held an anti-Abe rally at Aruta-mae, Shinzuku on August 4, 2019.<sup>90</sup> Five-thousand intellectuals, including Wada Haruki, an emeritus professor at Tokyo University, released and signed a statement against Abe’s trade provocation.<sup>91</sup> Shiraishi Takashi, the representative of Japan’s Alliance of Hope pointed out that the Supreme Court of Korea had a judgment on the reparation of the forced labour induced by Japanese corporations during the Second World War and that the Japanese government’s rejection of the judgment was to ignore the verdict based on the judicial independence in Korea and indicates the immaturity of Japanese democracy. Mr. Shiraishi contended that Japanese NGOs were partly responsible for Abe’s ill-informed policy and this makes it critical for Japanese and Korean NGOs to continue their exchanges.<sup>92</sup>

87 *Gwangju Ilbo*. 2019. “지도부, 올림픽 보이콧·여행 금지 등 반일 정서 과열 제동” (Leaders Rightly Oppose Boycotting the Olympic and Trip to Japan). August 9, <http://www.kwangju.co.kr/print.php?aid=1565293800673541004>, accessed February 1, 2021.

88 *Segye Ilbo*. 2019. “與, 反日 수위 조절... 野, 외교적 해결 촉구” (Leading Party Hopes the Control of the Level of Protesting Japan...Opposition Party Wants a Diplomatic Solution). August 8, <http://m.segye.com/view/20190808511760>, accessed February 2, 2019.

89 *Hankook Kyungje*. 2019. “[조재길의 경제산책] 일본인 환영...정치인보다 수준높은 시민들” (Citizens’ Treatment of Japanese Is Higher Standard Than Politicians). August 7, <https://www.hankyung.com/economy/article/201908078409i>, accessed February 2, 2019.

90 *Segye Ilbo*. 2019. “한일 경제대립 속 일본 국민들은 ‘좋아요\_한국’” (Many Japanese Tweet ‘Like\_Korea’ Amidst Korea-Japan Economic Conflict). August 10, <http://www.segye.com/newsView/20190809506048>, accessed February 2, 2019.

91 *Joongang Ilbo*. 2019. “[중앙시평] 일본 사람들의 마음을 사자.” August 9, <https://news.joins.com/article/23547724>, accessed February 1, 2021.

92 *Kyunghyang Sinmun*. 2019. “[인터뷰]시라이시 다카시 희망연대 대표 ‘아베 폭주 막지 못해 죄송...한국 민주주의 배워야’” (Shiraishi Dakashi of Hope Solidarity from Japan: Sorry for Not Being Able to Stop Abe’s Provocation & We Should Learn from Korean Democracy). August 8, [http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_news/khan\\_art\\_view.html?art\\_id=201908081657001](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?art_id=201908081657001), accessed February 2, 2021.

It is the grassroots that wanted and led a constructive movement, and they taught the government and elites what approach to take. The grassroots did not interfere with the government's diplomatic efforts to have the issue of forced labour resolved, nor did they want the government to interfere with the grassroots' voluntary boycott. The grassroots want to continue people's diplomacy at all levels including their opportunities for their businesses to sell their goods to the Japanese tourists. These activities are examples of calculated nationalism. They were advocating both personal and national interests, and these different interests were pursued in parallel rather than in conflict.

### *Social Media-Based Boycott*

An important reason that the grassroots could lead a boycott based on a clear rationale and civility is that they are netizens, with connectivity through online spaces and shared goals (Heimans and Timms 2018).<sup>93</sup> Social media such as social networking sites and KaKaoTalk effectively and rapidly expanded the support group for the boycott. The news and social media conveyed pieces of colonial histories and the background of the boycott, especially for school students,<sup>94</sup> who then engaged with their parents and diverse age groups.

In 2019 Korea was celebrating the 100th anniversary of the *March First Independence Movement* and the establishment of the Korean Provisional Government based in Shanghai during the Japanese colonial rule. Seongnam Arts Centre contracted Daum Webtoon Business to create a series of webtoons about thirty-three Independence Movement activists and distribute them through the top-ranked Daum portal (cf., Yecies and Shim 2021). The webtoons provided easy access to the colonial history for young people, and they were a reminder for adults.<sup>95</sup> According to Seo Yong-Gu, a professor of management, unlike past boycotts often led by older populations, the "No Abe" boycott was much more dynamic due to young people's sustained participation and related online activities such as netizens' sharing of

93 Cited in Choi Sun-Young. 2019. "보이콧 재팬, SNS 항일운동의 힘" (Boycotting Japan and the Power of Protesting Japan through SNS). *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, July 23. <http://m.hani.co.kr/arti/opinion/column/903047.html#cb>, accessed February 2, 2021.

94 *Choongcheong Today*. 2019. "대전 학원가 NO JAPAN 선언" (Private Academies in Daejeon Announces 'No Japan'). August 14, <https://www.cctoday.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2018223>, accessed February 3, 2021.

95 *Jeonja Sinmun*. 2019. "웹툰 독립운동" (Webtoon-Based Independent Movement). August 18, <https://m.etnews.com/20190814000300?obj=Tzo4OijzdGRDbGFzcyI6Mjpw7cz03OijyZWZlcmVyIjtoO3M6NzoiZmgyd2FyZCI7czoxMzoid2ViIHVvIG1vYmlsZSI7fQ%3D%3D>.

information about boycotting Japanese products or purchasing alternatives. Cho Chun-Han, another professor of management, reported that information sharing on Japanese products changed the consumption patterns of many products.<sup>96</sup>

“No No Japan” site<sup>97</sup> lists thousands of Japanese products and Korean-made substitutes in the broad categories of foods, electronic goods, cosmetics, medicine, apparel, hobby-related, motor vehicles, infants’ products, pet products, musical instruments, etc. The site also has sections on news and bulletin board, which bring the boycott-related news and facilitate exchanging the relevant information. Web-based communities with diverse foci, such as CLIEN,<sup>98</sup> also actively encourage their members to join the boycott. Many young people prepare a hand-written promise to themselves that their boycott will continue until Japan regrets and apologizes for the misdeeds. The message is shared on the online spaces, which is a way to earn recognition from their peers and the wider community.<sup>99</sup>

As already noted, the hashtag movement was active, spreading #Love\_Korea and #Love\_Japan. Twitter users from Korea and Japan shared the sentiment that political leaders may argue against each other to resolve the trade dispute, but the people should not. In online spaces, Koreans emphasized the need to distinguish “No Abe” from “No Japan.” A Japanese netizen shared, “Despite the rough political relations of Japan and Korea, I love Koreans, food, and music. I hope the people will remain friendly to each other.”<sup>100</sup>

### *Emergent Counter-Cultures*

Ever since the Japanese colonial period, Japanese cultures have been deep-seated in Korean society. Reviving the awareness of Japanese imperialism was an unexpected but apparent outcome of the Japanese trade provocation, without which younger Koreans would have continued to embrace

96 *Asia Kyungje*. 2019. “예전과 다른 일본 불매운동 100일...국민 스스로의 참여가 효과 더 높여” (100 Days of an Unusual Boycott of Japan...Grassroots Voluntary Participation Has Been Effective). October 11, <https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2019101115242825994>, accessed February 3, 2021.

97 <https://nonojapan.com>

98 <https://www.clien.net>

99 *Seoul Sinmun*. 2019. “짱구 대신 검정고무신, 일본어 안쓰기...밀레니얼 세대의 불매 운동” (Black Rubber Shoes Instead of Jjanggu, Avoid Japanese Words: New Generation’s Boycotting Japan). July 21, <https://www.seoul.co.kr/news/newsView.php?id=20190721500070>, accessed February 3, 2021.

100 *Money Today*. 2019. “日 ‘#좋아요\_한국’ 확산...韓서도 ‘반일 말고 반아베’” (‘#Like\_Korea’ Spreads in Japan; Anti-Abe Instead of Anti-Japan). August 8, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019080718065972195&EMBA>, accessed February 3, 2021.

Japanese products uncritically.<sup>101</sup> "Boycott Japan" brought about new ideas and cultures to combat Abe's trade egregiousness. Much of the emergent cultural phenomena reflected the given Korean context of material success. A supermarket in Daegu City held a special sale campaign for several Japanese products, e.g., beer, cigarettes, and biscuits, of which the prices were one thousand times normal prices. The price of a can of beer ranged from \$990 to \$1,980.<sup>102</sup> This campaign was meant to be a witty and sarcastic marketing strategy and may have indicated that the supermarket owner cares little even though the Japanese products do not generate any profit. Convenience stores such as GS25 have franchise stores throughout the nation. GS25 produced stickers to disseminate the history of the national flag and attached one to every lunchbox sold in their franchise shops. GS Supermarket, Lalavla, GS Fresh have produced 11,415 shopping bags with the map of the Korean peninsula and Dokdo Island, the latter of which Japan illegitimately claimed its ownership.<sup>103</sup>

Participating actively in the boycott, Yangju, Daegu, and Anyang cities checked the names of facilities and districts to identify any legacy from the Japanese colonial period in order to recover the original Korean names.<sup>104</sup> Some businesses had the names of their enterprises in Japanese or sold Japanese cuisine without any association to Japanese-made products. The owners were conscious of possible public suspicion of any close association with Japan. The business owners adopted new Korean names for their enterprises and shop owners replaced their old signboards.<sup>105</sup>

101 *YonhapNews TV*. 2019. "불매운동 넘어 과거사 관심도 '쑥'...신념소비" (Going Beyond Boycotting Japan and a Surge of the Colonial History... Thoughtful Consumption). July 30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BuQ7k6STPzk>, accessed December 6, 2020.

102 *Maeil Kyungje*. 2019. "아사히 맥주 한 캔에 158만원에 파는 슈퍼" (A Can of Asahi Beer Sells \$1,580 in a shop). July 29, <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/society/view/2019/07/577077/>, accessed February 10, 2021.

103 *Digital Times*. 2019. "'국산입니다'... '노 재팬' 반사이익 노린 애국마케팅" (Patriotic Marketing Says, 'Made in Korea' to Take Advantage of No Japan Movement). August 1, [http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article\\_no=2019080102101032060004&ref=jeadan](http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article_no=2019080102101032060004&ref=jeadan), accessed February 10, 2021.

104 *Kyunggi Ilbo*. 2019. "양주시, 일본의 경제침략에 대응 노재팬운동 범시민운동으로 추진 키로" (Yangju City Promotes No Japan Movement Broadly in the City). August 5, <https://www.kyeonggi.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=2142565>; *Kyungin Ilbo*. 2019. "아베 정권, 경제침략 규탄... 지역 정치권·지자체 한목청" (Local Politicians and Governments All Protest Against Abe Government's Economic Provocation). August 5, <http://www.kyeongin.com/main/view.php?key=20190804010000970>; *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. "일제가 붙인 '왜관', 본래 지명인 '칠곡'으로 되돌리자" ('Waegwan' Named by Japanese to Change to 'Chilgok'). July 30, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/PRINT/903879.html>, all accessed February 11, 2021.

105 *MBC News*. 2019. "노 재팬 간판부터 메뉴까지... 계약서는 중개보조원? 공인중개사?" (Loving Korean: Business Names, Restaurant Menus etc.). February 17, [https://imnews.imbc.com/replay/2020/nwtoday/article/5661678\\_32531.html](https://imnews.imbc.com/replay/2020/nwtoday/article/5661678_32531.html), accessed February 11, 2021.



Some films with anti-Japanese sentiments, which were screened at the time of the boycott, attracted large audiences. For example, a documentary film, *Shusenjo: The Main Battleground of the "Comfort Women" Issue* (2019), directed by Miki Dezaki, a Japanese-American, attracted 20,000 attendees within two weeks when screened in a small number of cinemas in July and August 2019, which was significant. Netizens gave much support to another forthcoming documentary movie, *Kim Bok-Dong*, based on a Japanese "comfort woman" victim and human rights activist. *The Battle: Roar to Victory* (봉오동 전투, 2019) is a film based on Korean independence fighters against Japanese soldiers in the 1920s and started screening on August 7, 2019, attracting an audience of 4.7 million.<sup>106</sup>

In August 2019, in an art exhibition to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the *March First Independence Movement*, ten artists presented their artworks depicting the sufferings of ordinary Koreans under Japanese hands. The artists noted that they were compelled to partake in the "No Japan" campaign with the skills they have and that they wished to stimulate the spirit of Korean nationalism as part of the boycott.<sup>107</sup> An art group, "Together with the Mountains" (산과함께), hosted an unplanned interactive debate with their audiences at the exhibition and discussed the ways to boycott Japan through artwork. Choi Hyung-Soon, an art critic, contended that the government's lead in the boycott could send the wrong messages to the international community, and that there is much that the power of culture and artwork can achieve. There were many similar exhibitions and performances in other parts of Gangwon-do Province and beyond.<sup>108</sup>

*"Wasn't Part of the Independence Movement, But I am Part of the Boycott":  
Prevalent Anger Towards the Trade Provocation*

I have already discussed how the agents elaborated on the emergent structures and cultures. Now I discuss further the grassroots'/agents' direct actions to bring about changes to the given structure and culture. Individual determination about, and participation in, the boycott was remarkable.

106 *Segye Ilbo*. 2019. "[한일 경제전쟁] 극장가도 '노 재팬'...도라에몽도 쓰러졌다" (No Japan in Film Industry...Even Doraemon Falls). August 2, <http://www.segye.com/news-View/20190802509824>, accessed February 12, 2021.

107 *Gangwon DominIlbo*. 2019. "강원문화계, 8월 '민족 애환' 예술로 꽃피워" (Culture Industry in Gangwon Province: Turning the Nation's Sorrow to a Cultural Work). August 1, <http://www.kado.net/news/articleView.html?idxno=980706>, accessed February 12, 2021.

108 *Gangwon DominIlbo*. 2019. "문화예술계 민간 주도 '노 재팬 운동' 확산 움직임" (People-Led Culture and Art Industry Leads No Japan Movement). August 3, [www.kado.net/news/articleView.html?idxno=981110](http://www.kado.net/news/articleView.html?idxno=981110), accessed February 13, 2021.

According to a *Realmeter* survey in early August 2019, 61.8 per cent of Koreans had participated in the boycott.<sup>109</sup> By November 2020 this participation rate had reached 71.8 per cent. Also, nearly 60 per cent (57.6 per cent) of Koreans anticipated that the boycott would likely continue for a long time, whereas 18.8 per cent expected it to dwindle.<sup>110</sup> Young people's participation in the boycott has been especially notable. A well-known phrase from young people was that "I could not be part of the national independence movement from Japan, but I am part of the boycotting of Japan." Once a small number of students in a school took initiative in the boycott, it spread rapidly to the whole school, and then to the students' parents. Students typically encouraged each other to purchase Korean-made stationery and consume Korean-produced foods.<sup>111</sup>

Consistent with the 1929 *Gwangju Students Independence Movement* from Japan, four-hundred students, supported by their 1,000 peers, wore the 1920s-style school uniforms to recall the spirit of the independence movement and made an anti-Abe announcement in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul on August 10, 2019.<sup>112</sup> Yu Min-Seo (17-years-old) condemned Abe's shameless behaviour of refusing apologies to the Japanese military "comfort women," noting that Abe initiated the trade provocation and that Abe must withdraw it and apologize to the victims immediately. Choi Min-Gyeong (18-years-old) could not comprehend the abuse of the women for the soldiers' sexual gratifications and demanded Japan's sincere apologies to the victims.<sup>113</sup> One-hundred-and-fifty students, their parents, and 250 teachers from the Association of Private Academies in Korea, which has its teaching venues in the seventeen cities, gathered in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to condemn prime minister Abe. The teachers claimed to be disappointed and betrayed by Abe's trade provocation as they taught

109 *Realmeter*. 2019. "3주 연속국민 60% 이상 '일제 불매운동' 참여 중..." (60% of the People Continue to Participate in Boycotting Japan over 3 weeks). August 8, <http://www.realmeter.net/3주-연속-국민-60-이상-일제-불매운동-참여-중/?ckattempt=1>, accessed February 13, 2021.

110 *Maeil Kyungje*. 2020. "10명 중 7명은 일본 불매운동 참여...42%, 지속하겠다" (7 Out of 10 Koreans Participate in Boycotting Japan...42% Will Continue). December 22, <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/business/view/2020/12/1307874/>, accessed February 13, 2021.

111 *Joongang Ilbo*. 2019. "고교생들도 '노 재팬'...광주 학생들, 일본産 볼펜 버린 이유는?" (Highschool Students in Gwangju Join 'No Japan'...Why Trashing Japanese Ballpens?). July 17, <https://news.joins.com/article/23528003>, accessed February 13, 2021.

112 <https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=503215127091278&ref=search>, accessed February 14, 2021.

113 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. "일본 아베 정부 규탄...소녀상 앞 대규모 촛불 물결" (Condemning the Abe Government...A Massive Candlelight Vigil in Front of the Statue of Peace). 10 August, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/905269.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/905269.html), accessed February 14, 2021.

Japanese languages and cultures for years. The students publicly read “The March First Declaration of Independence” and reminded themselves of the brutality of Japanese colonialism.<sup>114</sup> Students consciously refused to purchase the Japanese sportswear that they used to love. The shop owners in Yangdong Dried Seafood Market in Gwangju City agreed that action is much more than talking and that they completely quit dealing with any Japanese produced seafood and instead recommended Korean products to their customers.<sup>115</sup>

The participants treated the boycott as their personal, as well as national, movement as they tended to personalize the significance of the boycott and engaged in changing the diplomatic and trade relations between Korea and Japan. It is worth noting the participants combined personal and national interests, which is evidence of double-morphogenesis and calculated nationalism. It is difficult to assess whether the participants gave priority to national needs or personal gains. Yet, what is clear is that they were willing to give up their immediate gains for the sake of long-term individual and national gains. For example, some owners of grocery stores returned Japanese products, e.g., beer, cigarettes. According to one of the street vendors, participating in the boycott, she “wants to be a small additional support to the boycott at this time of national crisis.”<sup>116</sup> Nonetheless, Jeong Hae-Rang, a representative of 682 organizations (e.g., YMCA, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Korea Alliance For Progressive Movement) which were protesting against Abe Shinzo in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, called the 15,000 participants “the 21st-century independence activists” and requested that “we must treat Japanese with kindness and we are fighting against only Abe and Japanese militarism.”<sup>117</sup> The observers of the boycott noted that past boycotts differed from the 2019 campaign

114 *Seoul Kyungje*. 2019. “일본어 배우는 게 창피해...소녀상 앞에서 기미독립선언문 낭독한 학생들” (Students Are Ashamed of Learning Japanese...They Read Gimi Declaration of Independence). August 9, 2019, <https://www.sedaily.com/NewsView/1VMWIS6T22>, accessed February 14, 2021.

115 *Gwangju Maeilsinmun*. 2019. “한 달째 日 불매운동 더 확산된다” (Boycott Japan Has Been Spreading for a Month). August 1, [www.kjdaily.com/news\\_view.php?n=478678&tmp=20190801&s=5](http://www.kjdaily.com/news_view.php?n=478678&tmp=20190801&s=5), accessed February 14, 2021.

116 *Chungcheong Today*. 2019. “중소상인도 보이콧 재팬” (Small-to-Middle Shop-Owners Join Boycott Japan). July 30, <https://www.cctoday.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2015640>, accessed February 15, 2021.

117 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. “아베 정권 규탄, 강제징용 사죄하라, 시민 1만5천명 촛불을 들었다” (15,000 Citizens Condemn Abe Government and Demands Apologies for Recruiting of the Forced Labour). August 3, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/904398.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/904398.html), accessed February 15, 2021.

as the latter demonstrated smart and considerate approaches in terms of how and what to boycott. Initially, the boycotted items included everyday products like clothing, beer, and cosmetics and then soon expanded to motor vehicles, heavy industry types of equipment, and fishing tools. For example, S-1 is a company with a small portion of its ownership by Japanese shareholders, and produces electronic goods for security (e.g., CCTV), and employs 6,500 Korean workers. S-1 was not subject to the boycott. Also, Ministop is a Japanese convenient store with 2,400 chain stores in Korea. The branch managers run the stores as their only livelihood and therefore Ministop was not subject to the boycott.<sup>118</sup> The boycott strategy was highly calculative.

### *Diverse Groups' Participation and Diverse Views*

It is widely recognized that the citizens were the backbone of the 2019 boycott and their voluntary participation led the whole process. As discussed, the grassroots at times instructed the local governments and political elites not to participate or intervene in the grassroots' voluntary activities. Local governments' participation in supporting the boycott was criticized as an intention to seek political gains.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, the grassroots were much more mature and sophisticated than political leaders.<sup>120</sup> According to Yi Eun-Hee, professor of consumer science, the primary goal of boycotting Japan was not necessarily to target the Japanese government but to provide the Korean government with extra negotiation power.<sup>121</sup> However, Korean political parties could not agree on the strategies to fight against Abe.<sup>122</sup> Seo Kyung-Deok, a professor of marketing, pointed out that specific organizations have initiated boycotts against Japan in the past, however, the grassroots voluntarily initiated the boycotting of Japanese products; these products consequently lost their marketability. Further, Korean consumers changed

118 *Money Today*. 2019. "이전과는 다르다...불매운동은 지금 열정과 냉정 사이" (Boycott Japan Now Is Different from the Past... It Is a Sharp and Passionate Pursuit). August 19, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019081910301388201>, accessed February 15, 2021.

119 *YTN Radio*. 2019. "전우용, 주옥순 대표 발언...역사공부 30년 넘게 이런 경우 못 봤어." August 8, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb8roc4Piw>, accessed February 16, 2021.

120 *Gyeongnam Sinmun*. 2019. "정치권부터 불매(不買)하자" (Let Us Boycott Our Politicians First). August 14, <http://www.knnews.co.kr/news/articleView.php?idxno=1298859>, accessed February 16, 2021.

121 *Money Today*. "이전과는 다르다...불매운동은 지금 열정과 냉정 사이." August 19, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019081910301388201>, accessed February 15, 2021.

122 *Mudeung Ilbo*. 2019. "무등칼럼.광복절에 비쳐진 우리의 부끄러운 민낯" (Our Shame is Exposed at the Anniversary of the Independence Day). August 14, <https://mnews.sarangbang.com/detail/article/1651189>, accessed February 16, 2021.

their consumption patterns, using Korean products or alternatives, which ensured a long-term boycott in everyday life.<sup>123</sup>

Initially, Korean boycotters were informed of a Japanese response to the boycott—that there would be no serious consequences and the campaign would dwindle quickly. Angered by the Japanese response, the boycott further accelerated. Japanese responses were then, “It is lasting longer than expected. The impact is drastic. Korean tourists can’t be easily replaced.”<sup>124</sup> Japan’s sarcastic ridicule may not have been baseless when considering that some previous Korean boycotts and independence movements did not often last long enough during Japanese colonialism and many Koreans became Japanese collaborators.<sup>125</sup> However, that was also a time with no structural context favourable towards the Koreans. But during the boycott period the given and emergent structural and cultural properties were favourable towards the Korean boycott against Japanese products. New structure and culture must have influenced the agents’ perceptions of Japan, including Japanese products due to high-quality Korean products.<sup>126</sup> Japan continues to exercise its colonialism against Korea, although it is a new form of imperialism in the 21st century. However, Korean responses are not the same as in the past. Yang Geum-Deok (90-years-old), a victim of forced labour, publicly spoke at a mass protest against Abe, “Let us fight against Abe until we defeat him unlike our silent protest against Japan in the past. Let us now lead a happy life.”<sup>127</sup> Protesters anticipated that the goal of the boycott was to be economically independent of Japan and become a completely free nation-state.<sup>128</sup> The protesters were not only the actors to pursue the

123 *Asia Kyungje*. 2019. “예전과 다른 일본 불매운동 100일...국민 스스로의 참여가 효과 더 높여.” October 11, <https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2019101115242825994>, accessed February 16, 2021.

124 *Segye Ilbo*. 2019. “일본 여행 안 간다니까요, 닥타격 예상보다 컸다... 3537억 손실” (Not Travelling to Japan Has Hit Japan More Than Thought: \$353.7 Million Loss to Japan). October 6, <http://www.segye.com/newsView/20191006505828>, accessed February 16, 2021.

125 *Kyungin Ilbo*. 2018. “냄비 근성 운운 일본에 본패를 보여주자” (Let Us Show Our Boycott is Going to Last). October 8, <http://www.kyeongin.com/main/view.php?key=20191008010002377>, accessed February 16, 2021.

126 *Asia Kyungje*. 2019. “예전과 다른 일본 불매운동 100일...국민 스스로의 참여가 효과 더 높여.” October 11, <https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2019101115242825994>, accessed February 16, 2021.

127 *Aju Kyungje*. 2019. “10만 촛불이 외쳤다, ‘일본규탄’...비 그치며 하늘도 응답” (100,000 Candlelighters Condemned Against Japan). August 16, 2019, <https://www.ajunews.com/view/20190815195615243>, accessed February 16, 2021.

128 *Busan Ilbo*. 2019. “부산시민 주말 400여 명 모여, 아베 규탄” (Busan Citizens Condemning Abe Over the Weekend). August 18, <http://www.busan.com/view/busan/view.php?code=20190818000095>, accessed February 16, 2021.

recovery of the sovereignty of the Korean nation-state, but the warriors to correct the distorted history of the victims of Japanese imperialism, and to advocate for human rights and the universal values of peace, which the protesters thought Abe and Japanese imperialism continued to ignore.<sup>129</sup>

Some conservative politicians and activists exploited the boycott for their political gains. For instance, Na Kyung-Won, in-house representative of Liberty Korea Party (now People Power Party) claimed that Japan's de-whitelisting of Korea as a trade partner resulted from the Moon government's pro-North Korea and anti-Japan policies.<sup>130</sup> The conservatives bluntly contended that Moon and his aides are all commies.<sup>131</sup> Ju Ok-Soon, a standpattist political activist, made a statement in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, "Dear prime minister Abe, my whole-hearted apologies to you for the ignorant Korean leader's bringing down the Korea-Japan relationship."<sup>132</sup> These points were ahistorical, misinformed of the origins of the boycott, and did not represent the majority of the Korean conservatives.

Yeon Seung, a news reporter, shared a personal view that may represent prevalent reasons for participation in the boycott, especially those who often travel to Japan:

I don't need to travel to and spend my money in Japan when Japan treats Korea so badly. Japan used to be a shopping heaven with high-quality goods. Now Seoul is much better than Japan and lacks nothing by all means. ... I used to like Japanese cosmetics, but now there are plenty of alternatives. "No Japan" movement simply brings no inconvenience to my life.<sup>133</sup>

129 *Daejeon Ilbo*. 2019. "진천군, 日 경제 보복 규탄대회...제품 불매운동 결의" (Jincheon District Holds a Protest Against the Japanese Economic Provocation...Agreeing to Boycott Japan). August 11, [http://www.daejonilbo.com/news/newsitem.asp?pk\\_no=1382219](http://www.daejonilbo.com/news/newsitem.asp?pk_no=1382219), accessed February 16, 2021.

130 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. "아베 정권 규탄, 강제징용 사죄하라, 시민 1만5천명 촛불을 들었다." August 3, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/904398.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/904398.html), accessed February 17, 2021.

131 *JTBC*. 2019. "일본은 친구...빨갱이 몰아내자... 외친 보수단체 집회" (Japan is Our Friend... Drive Away Commies, Cried the Conservatives). August 16, [https://mnews.jtbc.joins.com/News/Article.aspx?news\\_id=NB11866365](https://mnews.jtbc.joins.com/News/Article.aspx?news_id=NB11866365), accessed February 21, 2021.

132 *JTBC*. 2019. "아베 수상님, 사죄드립니다, 엄마부대 주옥순 발언 파문" (Mom's Army Leader Ju Ok-Soon Causes a Controversy by Saying, 'Dear PM Abe, My Apologies'). August 6, accessed February 17, 2021.

133 *Seoul Kyungje*. 2020. "노재팬 실천중에 써본 한국이 만든 일본서 인기 있는 화장품" (Trying Out Korean-Made Cosmetics During No Japan, That Are Popular in Japan). August 15, <https://www.sedaily.com/NewsView/1Z6L8K6NEA>, accessed February 17, 2021.

## Concluding Remarks

According to Gellner (1983: 11, emphasis in original), “nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment. A nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind” (cited in Haas 1986: 720–721). This precisely reflects the Korean participants of the “No Japan” movement 2019. Pre-existing economic structure<sup>134</sup> and culture of the Korean society with reference to the Korean boycott of Japanese products can be understood with reference to Japanese imperialism and the inferior standards of Korean technologies and sciences in comparison to those of Japan. Since independence from Japan in 1945, Korean economic development has partly been dependent on its trade with Japan on the one hand, but Korea has achieved remarkable progress in many dimensions on the other. The accompanying structural and cultural changes in this process have brought about emergent structural and cultural properties. It is these contexts under which the Japanese trade provocation occurred, and which then ignited the Korean grassroots’ boycott in full confidence.

There were a few elite suggestions for a strategic boycott for better outcomes, e.g., to focus on boycotting a limited range of Japanese products to achieve an outcome rather than boycotting a broad range, and to make use of what Japan is and offers rather than be completely “anti-Japan.”<sup>135</sup> The outcome of the boycott certainly matters. However, this chapter has primarily focused on what the grassroots had in their minds and how they approached the boycott. According to Kozinets and Handleman (1998: 475), “boycotting serves as a vehicle for moral self-realization” to the boycott participants, and this motivation outweighs the sacrifice of constrained consumption. In a similar vein, even those who maintained some degree of positive attitudes towards Japan and its products seemed to suppress their routine purchasing of Japanese products. Consequently, the “No Japan” movement gave the government confidence in what it does.

The majority of Koreans hold “national animosity” towards Japan’s past and present imperialism. However, when the agent’s animosity is not overwhelmingly high, they may not participate in, or may even disapprove

134 Main Domains of Structure Include Roles, Organizations, Institutions and Systems (Archer 1996: 1).

135 *Kyunghyang Sinmun*. 2019. “심승규 日대학 교수, 아베정권을 상대로 불매운동해야” (Boycott Should Be against the Abe Regime).” August 11, [http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_news/khan\\_art\\_view.html?art\\_id=201908110910001](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?art_id=201908110910001), accessed February 17, 2021.

of, the boycott (cf., Ahn, Kwak, and Hwang 2014: 54), which was the case with a portion of Koreans. The boycott was initially protest-oriented but became mature and sophisticated, as displayed by the grassroots approach to separate civilian campaigns from political struggles, e.g., protesting against Abe and Japanese products, but welcoming Japanese tourists and maintaining people's diplomacy—this all represents calculated nationalism. For example, shop owners wanted to serve individual interests, as well as protect national pride and identity. In brief, Korean grassroots wanted the human rights of the forced labour victims to be compensated, but also see Japan as a close neighbour to live with in harmony, despite the colonial memories. This is their longer-term plan for world peace and to pursue human rights recognition and support in cooperation with the Japanese.

The Korean grassroots seem confident that they are now able to raise their voices against Japan. The suffering of Koreans under Japanese colonialism is inherent among Koreans ever since their Independence. Koreans are obsessed with their wins against Japan in all aspects such as sports, trade, and art. The "No Japan, No Abe" movement was an exemplar and the Korean grassroots seemed somewhat satisfied without clearly winning or losing the battle. The analysis of the media reports indicated that Japan wishes to continue its imperialism over Korea, whereas Korea wants to remove the imperial link and become completely sovereign. Eventually, Japan should not be seen as an enemy but as a neighbouring partner, which is in line with the wishes of the majority of Koreans. Two years after the start of the boycotting, the movement was not as strong as before and Korean grassroots seemed to look for ways to make up with the Japanese.<sup>136</sup>

In the context of the trade provocation, no major international concerns arose, as the relationship between Korea and Japan was not permanently broken, and Korea's national security was not hampered.<sup>137</sup> According to William Sposato, a Tokyo-based journalist, "Japan started a war it wasn't ready to fight."<sup>138</sup>

<sup>136</sup> The uneasy Korea-Japan relationship needs to be renewed. However, renewing it without rectifying the Japan-led distorted history will only make it resurface and become an obstacle for the relationship again in the future. How the conservative Yoon Suk-Yeol regime will cultivate the relationship remains to be seen.

<sup>137</sup> *Munhwa Ilbo*. 2019. "<뉴스와 시각>혐일(嫌日)도 공일(公日)도 포퓰리즘이다" (Neither Hate Japan Nor Fear Japan Is the Way Forward)." August 8, <http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=2019080801073030119001>, accessed February 2, 2021.

<sup>138</sup> *Foreign Policy*. 2019. "Japan Started a War It Wasn't Ready to Fight." August 6, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/06/japan-started-a-war-it-wasnt-ready-to-fight/>, accessed February 13, 2022.



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# 5 Taking a Free Ride on the Reunification Train

## Grassroots' Cost-Benefit Nationalism

### Abstract

The impact of the divided Korean peninsula has been destructive, and the cost has been astronomical to both South and North Korea. Most South Koreans used to dream of a reunified Korea without reservation until the 1980s, singing, “Our Wish is Reunification.” A good portion of South Koreans had family and relatives living in the North, and ethno-nationalism was a prevalent form of nationalism, through which South Koreans perceived North Koreans and the Northern regime. However, the 21st-century South Korean wish for reunification is quite different, and Chapter 5 analyses the grassroots’ “cost-benefit nationalism” towards reunification.

**Keywords:** reunification, the Korean peninsula, reunification tax, cost-benefit nationalism

### Introduction

Upon the end of the Korean War (1950–1953), many Koreans yearned for the reunification of North and South Korea so that their separated families and clans could live together in one nation-state. The two Koreas have technically been at war, and they have spent a significant portion of their GDPs to fund their military and arms race, with young men conscripted to defend the nation from possible aggression from each other. Conservative political parties and elites in the South generally took an anti-communist stance to legitimate their regimes during the Cold War to better protect South Korea from possible invasion from the North. Fundamentalist Christians, many of whom fled the North during the war, have well embraced the

anti-communist approaches to the North. North Korea's nuclear tests to produce weapons of mass destruction have hindered the peace process and the reunification of the two Koreas. Vested interests of the neighbouring superpowers, such as the United States, Japan, China, and Russia, could not come to terms with the ways to facilitate the peace process (Park 2011: 141).

Under progressive governments, in particular, South Korean presidents have initiated North-South Korean Summits, which significantly boosted South Korean aspirations for reuniting the two Koreas. The desire has also been fuelled by South Korea's drive to take advantage of human and natural resources available in the North for economic development, the benefit of which could have a flow-on effect on the poor quality of life under the slow economic growth in recent decades. If there were to be a reunification of the two Koreas in a decade or two, the younger generation would experience the tangible benefits. This is what the older generation would like to offer if possible. However, the younger generation in particular, and South Koreans in general, increasingly lack aspirations for a reunified Korea (Kim 2014). This chapter aims to analyse media reports and narratives as to why Koreans are increasingly indifferent to, or disinterested, in the possible reunification concerning the costs of reunification.

## Literature Review

South Korean perception of reunification and fellow Koreans in the North has fluctuated, especially in recent decades, depending upon the influence of events such as natural disasters, nuclear arms development in the North, the North-South Summits in 2007 and 2018, and the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. The 2018 North-South Summit brought about a heightened interest in reunification (Yang 2019: 48). The characteristics of South Korean government policies towards North Korea and reunification have also heavily driven the public perception of reunification. For example, under the progressive Moon Jae-In's presidency, a survey in May 2018 reported that 83.5 per cent considered reunification possible and 64.6 per cent anticipated many benefits of reunification.<sup>1</sup> However, unlike the common assumption that progressive news outlets will support the reunification and conservative outlets not support it, Kim Jae-Han (2009) had earlier found that whether a media outlet is progressive or conservative is irrelevant to their viewpoints towards North Korea (Park et al. 2020: 168). This indicates that

1 Hankook Research ([www.hrc.co.kr](http://www.hrc.co.kr) 2018, cited in Park Jong-Min et al. 2020: 167).

understanding the issue with North Korea is complex and its understanding needs to be contextualized. There are three broad strands in my interest areas in research of the reunification of two Koreas. First, the research on the variables explains South Koreans' diverse perceptions of reunification. Second, reunification education is designed to inform the citizens of a better understanding of reunification. Third, some studies have discussed unification tax as a way to fund reunification.

First, past studies have suggested several different independent variables in explaining South Koreans' varied perceptions of the reunification of the two Koreas (Kim 2019a; Choi et al. 2016; Lee 2014). They include demographics (e.g., age, gender, education, income, and birthplace), ideology, political party identity, ethnonational identification with North Koreans, socio-cultural elements, and cost-benefit calculations (individual and national levels). Older persons and men feel the need for reunification more than younger persons and women. The Ministry of Reunification conducted a survey of school students in 2014. Responding to the question, "Reunification is necessary," 53.5 per cent of them "agreed"—i.e., 71 per cent of primary-school, 54.3 per cent of middle-school and 47.8 per cent of high-school students (Institute of Reunification Education 2014: 6; Park and Seo 2018: 440). Another survey by the Ministry of Reunification in 2017 showed that 62.6 per cent of the school students agreed with the same question whereas 47.9 per cent of university students agreed with it (The Ministry of Education December 29, 2017, cited in Park and Seo 2018). Park and Seo (2018: 456) and other researchers report an increasingly significant difference between the generations in terms of their desires for reunification. Young people are increasingly indifferent to reunification and more young people are questioning the need for reunification (Oh and Yun 2015: 113; Han 2016: 139; Seo 2017: 116). This may be partly because their life experiences have always been with a relatively affluent Korea and they do not see a convincing reason to share their wealth with fellow North Koreans. This equally applies to those suffering from relative deprivation. Consequently, especially young people question reunification rather than desiring it if ethnonational identification is put forward as a reason.

People with more education tend to recognize better the need for reunification (Park et al. 2020; Chang and Kim 2015; Kim 2019a: 107). Those earning higher income tend to perceive reunification negatively (Cho and Han 2014: 166; Kim 2019a: 107; Park et al. 2020: 188),<sup>2</sup> as they may not feel

2 Gang Ju-Hyun (2013) found that gender and income are not meaningful elements to influence one's perception of the reunification.

comfortable sharing the wealth they are currently enjoying. Those with politically progressive ideology and those who support progressive political parties perceive reunification to be necessary. Conservatives are less likely to desire reunification (Lee 2014: 195; Park 2013: 434–436).

The more study participants consider fellow North Koreans as the same Korean people, the more they positively perceive reunification (Lee 2014). The significance of ethnic nationalism in terms of reunification of two Koreas is decreasing. According to a 2019 survey by the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development (cited in Kim 2019b: 64), 24.4 per cent of Korean Protestant church-goers and 19.6 per cent of non-Protestants<sup>3</sup> agreed that the reunification should occur because North and South Koreans are people with the same ancestors. Interestingly, both groups of Protestants (44.6 per cent) and non-Protestants (48.2 per cent) agreed with the need for reunification for the sake of providing a new dynamic for economic growth (p. 64). The economic reason for reunification is approximately double the ethno-nationalistic reason. In contrast, Jung et al. (2018) conducted a survey of 1,200 participants in 2018 and found that respondents picked the ethno-nationalistic reason for the need for reunification (45.1 per cent), followed by the eradication of the threat of war (31.4 per cent)—(Kim 2019b). The same survey found that 34.67 per cent selected the economic burden caused by reunification, followed by potential social problems to arise due to reunification (27.67 per cent), as the reason why reunification should not proceed. I argue that Koreans want to see the reunification for economic benefit, but are reluctant to pay the related cost during and after reunification. They would like to enjoy all the potential benefits of reunification, provided that there will be no personal burdens to bear. Kim (2019b: 64) adds that respondents are sensitive to their gain or loss, which might occur due to reunification, rather than concerned with ideological or ethno-nationalistic reasons.

Park and Seo (2018: 454) asked their study participants about their perceptions of potential gains and losses from the possible reunification of two Koreas. The students' responses to the question, "North Koreans are the same people (*minjok*) who share the ancestors with South Koreans" were 5.88 out of 10. This indicates that the respondents saw a gulf of socio-historical differences between North and South Koreans and that ethnonational identification is not as significant as it was in the past. Park and Seo (2018: 456) argue that the university students anticipate that actual reunification

<sup>3</sup> This is a comparison of Protestant church-goers (개신교인) with non-Protestants (비개신교인).

will cause a high related cost and tax and that the current discrepancy in living standards between North and South Korea will lead to a high cost of social welfare, and consequently worsen the quality of their life. Park and Seo contend that reunification education should emphasize teaching the students about socio-political benefits. In the same vein, Yang (2019) suggests that reunification education should incorporate the benefits of “the social stability and development” that was experienced in the case of the German Reunification. The question is whether the university students, who are increasingly facing reduced life opportunities (Han 2019: Ch.3), will be persuaded by the speculative and intangible socio-political benefits that might come through reunification.

The second strand of reunification research is about educating citizens to provide them with a vision of a prosperous reunified Korea. There are three areas of reunification education: (1) education about reunification, (2) education for reunification, and (3) post-reunification (Park 2012: 187). Researchers have argued for the importance and relevance of reunification education for the following reasons. First, education aims to provide the public with an understanding of the need for reunification and future direction, which would lead to a broader public consensus for reunification. Second, education would provide the public with an accurate picture of North Korea (Chung 2014: 161). When younger people, in particular, are relatively indifferent to reunification, it is challenging to carry out effective education for reunification. Although education for reunification is well intended for the benefit of the younger generation, the latter could perceive it as a biased effort to inject a desire for reunification. Seo Hyun-Jin (2017) hypothesizes that the generational differences regarding aspirations of reunification result from the different reunification education that people have received during their youth. Middle-aged Koreans received an ideologically based education during their youth, which led them to think of the interest and necessity of reunification and consider fellow North Koreans as originally the “same” Koreans. However, reunification education for the younger generation was much more based on reality and practicality in the information era, which encouraged them to question the possible problems that might occur upon reunification (p. 122). Seo Hyun-Jin partly considers some dimensions of structural and cultural contexts under which different generations of Koreans have considered reunification. However, the primary concern remains unresolved with reference to the individual agents and reunification education. The relevant structure and culture are yet to be fully considered.



Finally, reunification's expected costs and benefits have significantly influenced individual perceptions of reunification. Those who think of more benefits and less costs tend to consider reunification necessary. South Koreans commonly assume that the reunification will cause an exponential expenditure to fund the education and social welfare of Koreans in the North. Studies show that the expected costs and taxes are the discouraging elements across the generations (Woo 2017: 218). After the war threat discouraged Koreans from anticipating reunification, the possible cost and tax were the following main reasons discouraging reunification (Oh and Yun 2015: 114; Yang 2019: 52–53). Many studies agree that the socio-economic costs and disruptions will be high on the one hand (Yi 2000: 319–320; Yi 2008; Son 2009; Yun 2011: 252–289), and others argue that the media has ignored the relevance of the German reunification model to Korea and the possible high cost of reunification is the main viewpoint the Korean public has absorbed (Han 2015: 335; Yang 2019: 54; Yun 2011). In contrast, Yun (2011) and Son (2016: 310) argue that the costs and disruptions would be temporary, and the benefits would be for generations to come. However, there is much uncertainty about the socio-economic status of both Koreas at the time of reunification, which makes it difficult to measure the costs and benefits of reunification (Lee 2012).

There is a clear recognition that reunification's expected costs and benefits are the key influential elements determining people's perceptions of reunification. According to the prospect theory, people are more sensitive to costs or losses than the benefits (Kahneman and Tversky 1979). There has been little examination of public discourse around reunification in the media, especially the kinds of concerns that individuals may have. TV and online news are key sources of information about the possible reunification (Kim 2019b: 68) and as such it is worth analysing the relevant media narratives.

Kim Do-Kyung (2019a) contends that the division of the Korean peninsula has been prolonged and that ethno-nationalistic sentiment is unable to persuade university students in their 20s of the need for reunification. Consequently, the cost-benefits of the reunification for individuals and the nation-state have become essential criteria for young people. A difficulty with the research on reunification, in general, is that it is speculative. For example, Kim Do-Kyung (2019a: 112–113) found in his survey of 1,060 university students in Busan that 63.8 per cent considered reunification beneficial to the nation-state and that 42.6 per cent considered the reunification to be beneficial to them individually. Kim (2019a: 121) interprets the statistical finding in haste that young

people prioritize national interest rather than personal interest. This interpretation seems to be the researcher's desire and far from reality. The difficulty in this leads me to examine the broader discourse about reunification concerning the costs of reunification and tax. Despite ideology being a factor in all kinds of debates in Korea, it is now possible that ideology has little to do with the public perception of reunification, but more to do with cost-benefit.

Whether a South Korean is willing to pay reunification tax or related-costs depends on how they perceive and approach the possible reunification. Those who strongly desire reunification are willing to meet the related-costs. Kim (2019a: 118) also noted that how his study participants perceived the reunification costs and benefits determined whether or not they considered the reunification necessary. Those who considered the reunification beneficial to the South Korean nation-state or individuals think it is necessary to have the two Koreas reunified (Kim 2019a: 115–116). Other studies have investigated possible costs of reunification, appropriateness of reunification tax (Kim and Shin 2016b), ways to introduce a reunification tax with public consensus (Kim 2010), and the correlation between awareness of reunification tax and support for it (Sim and Park 2013). Kim and Shin (2016a: 26) point out that the people will have to pay the tax, but most Koreans are not well informed of the need to establish a reunification tax, which is problematic. Under these circumstances, it seems unfeasible to establish the reunification tax. Even if it was established, people's tax payments might not be based on a rational (informed) choice (Slovic and Peters 2006; cited in Kim and Shin 2016a: 26).

In brief, numerous studies have analysed the trends of media reports on the perception of North Korea and reunification (Yi et al. 2015; Choi and Ha 2016). These indicated that the cost-benefit impacts of reunification at the personal and national levels are crucial considerations. Instead of repeating the studies, I shall investigate the public debate on the reunification cost and tax, as these are influential elements that affect how individuals perceive the national identity of a reunified Korea. The Korean media has voiced both supportive and negative views towards reunification over the years, depending on the political stance of a media outlet and given political context. Thus, prevalent views in the media may not necessarily represent the majority of consumers of the media (Kim 2003; Park et al. 2020: 167). I intend to elaborate on the media narratives concerning reunification cost and tax—both supportive and negative. This is to understand where the public debate is, rather than how to inject the importance of reunification tax into the minds of the public.

## A Morphogenetic Background of the Reunification of the Korean Peninsula

South and North Korea have been hostile to each other since the Korean War as they have technically still been at war. However, inter-Korean dialogues have developed over the years, and South Korean political parties have become diverse, with a spectrum and combination of progressive and conservative viewpoints regarding North Korea and reunification. Over this time, the socio-economic conditioning has been under the tight control by conservative anti-communist governments and ideology, along with followers such as the national flag-carriers. Citing Carl Schmitt (2006), Kim Sang-Jun (2017: 71) notes that “the permanent emergency state system” has placed the whole nation-state in emergency systems that allow for the control of behaviours of the citizens. Both Koreas have been antagonistic to each other. However, both Koreas simultaneously joined the United Nations as members in 1991, which led the Korean peninsula to a new context. Around the late 1980s and the early 1990s, East and West Germany were reunified, and the Cold War moved to a stage with supposedly less tension. In December 1991, both Koreas signed the Inter-Korean Agreements (남북기본합의서), stating to recognize each other’s political governance, not to attack each other, and to increase the inter-Korea relations (p. 82). According to Kim (p. 87), putting aside what North Korea wanted, the NGOs and the governments in South Korea, irrespective of whether they were conservative or progressive, hastily put out their plans and activities for post-reunification of the peninsula. However, both Koreas’ recognition of each other’s governance as they are has to be given priority as the immediate action to take. Kim (2017, 2019c) refers to the so-called “One Nation, Two States.” This idea involves fundamental changes to the North and South relationship (i.e., structural shift) and how to perceive possible reunification (i.e., cultural shift). Many individuals (agents) in South Korea cannot comprehend these shifts, which has made the public debate difficult and less than productive.

Soon after the Korean War, the discrepancy between South and North Korean economies was far less than that in the following years. Thus, before the war, the two Koreas were structurally not dissimilar to each other, but the culture of animosity to each other was extreme, despite a strong belief in the one people with the same ancestors. The increasing structural and cultural discrepancy between the two Koreas has increasingly made reunification difficult. South Korea’s key drive to pursue reunification seems based on its desire to live in peace or without the threat of war and

to further its economic prosperity. Whether South Koreans are willing to pay the costs of reunification demands analysis.

## Research Methods

News reports for this chapter are sourced from the KINDS (Korea Integrated News Database System), developed by the Korean Press Foundation, and covers local, national newspapers, TV reports, and magazines with full texts since 1990. Regarding reunification cost and tax, I have searched “통일비용” (reunification cost) and “통일세” (reunification tax) on news titles and texts, covering from January 2011 to December 2021. The search produced 162 news reports, which amounted to 253 pages in single-spaced A4. I have also searched “통일인식” (awareness of reunification) on news titles, covering from January 2011 to March 22, 2021. This produced 85 news reports, amounting to 93 pages in single-spaced A4. It is tempting to limit the analysis to news editorials and columns in the interest of time and convenience. They may primarily represent the intellectual groups rather than the broader public discourse, which led me to broaden the types of news items that I include and analyse. I have used NVivo12 to facilitate the analysis of the data on the basis of the principles of grounded theory methodology, going through open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

## Findings

Focusing on the data on reunification costs and tax, the analysis shows that there are many complex structural and cultural properties beyond the costs per se. Obstacles to reunification include the geopolitical interests of the neighbouring superpowers and economic discrepancies between the North and South. The only way to go seems to have a thorough preparation with a strong economy. President Lee Myung-Bak formally raised the need to establish a reunification tax in his speech to commemorate the 65th anniversary of Independence Day on August 15, 2010. However, little has been done due to external factors, including North Korea's negative response. Most Koreans want reunification for economic benefit, but they want to pay minimum “reunification costs” if such tax is introduced (Choi et al. 2016: 99). The media notes that the bulk of the reunification costs will be used to elevate the living standard of North Koreans to that of South Koreans. In

the following sections, I present data analysis to discuss emergent economic and cultural properties which encourage or discourage Koreans from paying for the reunification costs. Followed are the individual agents' efforts to orchestrate the given structural and cultural contexts (i.e., structural and cultural elaboration) to achieve or prevent reunification.

### Possible Scenarios of Reunification

Experts note that a possible scenario in North Korea, resulting from reunification, could be unexpected politico-economic turmoil. The impacts on the South would be well beyond the geopolitical risks that have occasionally caused temporary impacts on financial markets. The impacts would be apparent in politics, military crisis, and social disruption, which could cause astronomic reunification costs and total panic for the domestic and international investors in the Korean market.<sup>4</sup> Grassroots may be aware that they have little control over how they react to the disruptions.

Concerning the preparation for Korean reunification, there are numerous references to the lessons from the German experience. Rainer Eckert, a German historian, contends that "Germany faced its reunification without preparation, but was able to cope with the turmoil thanks to the ongoing interactions between East and West Germany." Eckert advises that South Koreans need to be alerted with more awareness of the need for reunification.<sup>5</sup> Rolf Mafael, German ambassador to Korea, points out that South Korean youth should consider reunification to be a crisis rather than an opportunity because they are worried about the reunification costs.<sup>6</sup> The German reunification is now assessed as successful in nation-building, thanks to a massive investment (e.g., Solidarity Surcharge) to reduce the

4 *Hankook Ilbo*. 2011. "한국 경제 새로운 10년, 새로운 도전: 북한 그리고 통일" (Korean Economy Next 10 Years, New Challenges: North Korea and Reunification). January 6, <https://m.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201101061221938481>, accessed April 5, 2021; *Herald Kyungje*. 2011. "신평사 한국보는 눈 달라졌다...금융보다 통일비용에 포커스" (Credit Rating Agency's New Way to Assess Korea: Focus on the Reunification Cost Rather Than Finance). December 22, <http://news.heraldm.com/view.php?ud=20111222000399&mod=skb>, accessed April 5, 2021.

5 *Kangwon Ilbo*. 2013. "젊은이에게 통일에 대한 인식 심어주기는 쉽지 않을 것 정치권에서 관심 가져야" (A Challenge in Creating Awareness of the Need for Reunification Among the Youth). September 27. <http://www.kwnews.co.kr/nview.asp?s=501&aid=213092600142>, accessed April 5, 2021.

6 *Kookmin Ilbo*. 2014. "한반도 갑작스런 통일 염두에 뒤야... 한국 젊은이 기회보다 위기 인식, 주한독일대사, 한신대 특강" (German Ambassador: Need to Prepare for a Sudden Reunification... Young Koreans See It As a Risk Rather Than an Opportunity). October 23, <http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0922821783>, accessed April 5, 2021.

income discrepancy between East and West Germany. Professor Yoo Ho-Yeol warns that the German experience entailed a high cost, and the process to overcome political and psychological effects took a while, and these issues raise concerns to South Koreans.<sup>7</sup> Whether through a tax, national bond, or fund, it is the people's burden to bear, and they are resisting it. Thus, it is critical to persuade the people to contribute to the costs.<sup>8</sup>

### Time to Prepare the Costs or Is It Pointless?

There are competing views on how to fund the reunification costs. The first is establishing a reunification tax or fund to reserve the required costs. President Lee Myung-Bak claimed in his speech to commemorate National Independence Day on August 15, 2010 that the reunification ought to take place someday and raised the need to collect the reunification tax.<sup>9</sup> According to a commonly cited cost of reunification, it could cost South Korea up to \$2 trillion or every South Korean \$50,000 over thirty years. Dr. Kim Young-Yun argues that South Korea has to save at least the reunification cost of the first year so that the related laws could be legislated in that period. The first twelve months will cost \$6 billion to provide basic welfare for the disadvantaged in the North, systems integration into one nation-state, and investing in the economic structure.<sup>10</sup> The advocates argue that just as purchasing a home and preparing a wedding require appropriate savings, reunification definitely requires the preparation of a fund, accompanying the government's seeking consensus from the people.<sup>11</sup> Different government departments, such as the Ministry of Reunification and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, have deliberated on the ways to collect the fund for the reunification. For example, the Ministry of Reunification could create a Reunification Pot (통일항아리), which

7 *Hankook Ilbo*. 2011. "한나라 통일정책 TF 논의 방향은" (Hannara Party's Directions for Reunification). March 6, <https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201103061183683242>, accessed April 6, 2021.

8 *Money Today*. 2011. "갑작스레 통일 닥치면 그 돈은 어떻게..." (How to Fund a Sudden Reunification?). December 20, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2011122013375371420>, accessed April 6, 2021.

9 *Hankook Ilbo*. 2011. "강경기조 틈새 대화 가능성 열어놔...MB 남북관계 발언 변화" (President Lee Myung-Bak Keeping Open the Inter-Korea Dialogue Option in the Midst of a Tension). January 27, <https://news.v.daum.net/v/20110127023708098?f=0>, accessed April 7, 2021.

10 *Hankook Ilbo*. 2011. "한국 경제 새로운 10년, 새로운 도전: 북한 그리고 통일."

11 *Maeil Sinmun*. 2011. "민주당, '통일세 반대' 설득력 없다" (Democratic Party's Opposition to the Reunification Tax is Baseless). January 6, <http://news.imaeil.com/InnerColumn/2011010607050147966>, accessed April 7, 2021.

would put together the unused South-North Exchange Fund (남북교류기금) and the new voluntary donations.<sup>12</sup> The Ministry of Economy and Finance argues that the current South-North Exchange and Cooperation Project Fund (남북협력기금, \$1.007 billion) and a contingency fund of \$2.8 billion would not be enough, and therefore it is necessary to establish reunification tax.<sup>13</sup> The Ministry of Economy and Finance also expresses serious concerns about burdening the taxpayers, which may weaken the national financial situation, and instead suggests a reunification fund, national bond, or reunification lottery tickets.<sup>14</sup> The debates on how to save for reunification costs continued for several years, and the fairest ways to fund the costs were hotly debated, but these have not resulted in any concrete decisions.

North Korea was vehemently against the South-North Exchange and Cooperation Project Fund and another tax or fund to prepare for reunification because the funds were based on anticipating the collapse of the North Korean regime. Thus, North Korean media labelled the South Korean funds “the tax of fighting and war.”<sup>15</sup> Undoubtedly, there is a need to reserve a significant amount of funds to prepare for reunification. However, the whole issue of reunification is discussed at events, such as a North-South summit, or presidential comments on the matter. Nonetheless, there is little effort to keep it an ongoing public debate, including what both Koreas can do here and now.

The second view on the preparation for the reunification costs is that it will not positively impact achieving reunification. Fifty per cent of the respondents of a 2011 survey agreed that “a reunification fund will be required in the future, but too early for now. About twenty per cent (19.7) responded that the tax is unnecessary and not the right time to discuss

12 *Money Today*. 2011. “류우익 통일부 장관, 통일기금 20년 동안 55조원 조성” (Minister of Reunification Argues for the Reservation of a Fund of \$55 Billion in the Next 20 Years). November 23, [https://m.mt.co.kr/renew/view.html?no=2011112315585167488&MVR\\_T#\\_eniple](https://m.mt.co.kr/renew/view.html?no=2011112315585167488&MVR_T#_eniple), accessed April 8, 2021.

13 *Aju Kyungje*. 2011. “통일비용 문제 급부상, 다음 정권 증세 불가피” (A Sudden Surge of the Cost of Reunification—Inevitable for the Next Government to Establish a Tax). December 21, <https://m.ajunews.com/amp/20111221000500>, accessed April 8, 2021.

14 *Financial News*. 2011. “정부, 통일세 사실상 폐기” (The Government Virtually Discarding the Reunification Tax). March 22, <https://www.fnnews.com/news/201103221709330067?t=y>, accessed April 8, 2021.

15 *Kyunghyang Sinmun*. 2011. “남북 대화없이 가진 않을 것...쌀 빼고 밀가루는 지원 가능” (Humanitarian Support for North Korea is Possible but a Inter-Korea Dialogue Essential). July 17, [http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_news/khan\\_art\\_view.html?art\\_id=201107172204195](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?art_id=201107172204195), accessed April 9, 2021.

it.”<sup>16</sup> A Research & Research’s survey revealed that 73.6 per cent agreed with the need to reserve some resources for reunification. However, despite the support to create a fund for the purpose, only 10 per cent (9.8) agreed to establish a reunification tax.<sup>17</sup> The Democratic Party, in particular, opposed the reunification tax, since it angers North Korea and is burdensome to the South Korean taxpayers. Instead, the Democratic Party argued for the North-South interchanges to reduce the difference in living standards, which could reduce the reunification costs. For example, providing railway services in North Korea connecting to China, Russia, and Europe could be a significant economic stimulus.<sup>18</sup> A broader context of not supporting the reunification tax is that taxpayers are reluctant to pay the tax since they do not see persuasive reasons and tangible benefits. Yun Sang-Hyun, a parliamentarian, argues that the current South-North Exchange and Cooperation Project Fund (\$1.2 billion) could be used for cooperation first before more funds are collected.<sup>19</sup> According to an editorial, pushing for a reunification tax without people’s consensus or consideration of the tax burden for ordinary people could divide the nation rather than be constructive.<sup>20</sup> As the reunification tax became politicized and turned out to be a concern for the taxpayers, the Korean Blue House expressed that President Lee Myung-Bak’s raising the issue was meant to “listen to the people from diverse groups and encourage them to participate in the debate.” Kim Jin, the reporting columnist, noted, “the president isn’t doing his duties and contemplating what the next tax to collect will be.”<sup>21</sup> Facing the general and presidential elections, the ruling party abandoned the reunification

16 *Seoul Sinmun*. 2011. “통일기금 필요해도 아직 일러, 50%” (50% says, Reunification Fund is Required, But Too Early). January 1, <http://www.seoul.co.kr/news/newsView.php?id=20110101004008>, accessed January 1, 2011.

17 *Naeil Sinmun*. 2011. “통일세, 대북정책 공감없인 조세저항” (Without National Empathy About Policies Towards the North, Reunification Tax Will be Resisted). July 18, [https://www.naeil.com/news\\_view/?id\\_art=23190](https://www.naeil.com/news_view/?id_art=23190), accessed April 14, 2021.

18 *Maeil Sinmun*. 2011. “민주당 ‘통일세 반대’ 설득력 없다.” January 6.

19 *Herald Kyeongje*. 2011. “통일재원 어떻게?...통일세 놓고 당정 미묘한 온도차” (How to Prepare the Resources for Reunification: Political Parties’ Subtle Differences Over Reunification Tax). February 28, <http://news.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud=20110228000346&mod=skb>, accessed April 13, 2021.

20 *Seoul Kyeongje*. 2011. “통일세 신설, 국민적 공감대 뒷받침돼야” (The Establishment of Reunification Tax Requires National Empathy). July 18, <https://www.sedaily.com/NewsView/1HRO25BPE6>, accessed April 13, 2021.

21 *Jeonbuk DominIlbo*. 2011. “개콘보다 더 웃기기” (High Level Bureaucrats’ Nonsensical Comments). July 27, <http://www.domin.co.kr/news/articleViewAmp.html?idxno=829353>, accessed April 14, 2021.



tax, agreeing with the priority to strengthen the national fiscal capacity, unburdening the taxpayers.<sup>22</sup>

While there was a significant emphasis on the cost of reunification that South Korea has to bear, an equally strong counter-argument was that the benefit of reunification was more significant than the cost, which was one of the several most argued points in the data. Notably, the benefits of reunification are long-lasting, whereas the costs are for a relatively short period. Common justifications for the benefit include an increase in the value of stocks and real estate, the abundant natural resources in the North, and an increase in the size of the domestic market, enabling economies of scale, which means the utilization of fellow North Koreans as the consumers of South Korean industries. A critique of such justifications contends that those benefits may have little to do with the ordinary Koreans.<sup>23</sup> The advocates for the benefits argue that the costs of division will be cancelled out by \$16.6 billion (i.e., compared to the gain from the reunification), economic vitality will generate \$16.4 billion, and a non-economic benefit to generate \$16.2 billion, making \$49.2 billion in total.<sup>24</sup> The reduction of defence costs and the removal of conscription will contribute to economic growth. Technologies in the South and labour power and natural resources in the North will create a synergy for economic growth. The removal of the risks based on the division will push up the credit rates of the nation.<sup>25</sup> Yu Ik-Seon, an investment researcher, argues that the reunification costs will turn out to be a long-term investment for a better life.<sup>26</sup> News reports have also cited overseas news. For example, the *Economist* noted that the reunification cost could be \$1 trillion. Still, the value of natural resources from the North is many times more than that, and JP Morgan predicted that

22 *Seoul Kyungje*. 2011. “통일세는 치적 쌓기용?” (Reunification is Only for the Sake of National Leaders’ Performances?). October 9, <https://www.sedaily.com/NewsView/1HQUV1O2YU>; *Financial News*. 2011. “정부, 통일세 사실상 폐기.” March 22.

23 *Hankyoreh Sinmun*. 2016. “통일대박론보다 중요한 건 객관적 현실인식” (Objective Reading of Reality is More Important Than an Uninformed ‘Reunification as an Incredible Fortune’).” November 17, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/book/770830.html>, accessed April 15, 2021.

24 *Money Today*. 2011. “통일비용 10년 간 최대 2800兆 소요” (Reunification Cost, Up to \$2.8 Trillion Over 10 Years). October 7, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2011100713432251568>, accessed April 15, 2021.

25 *Maeil Kyungje*. 2012. “남북통일 손익계산서 두드려보면” (Calculating the Cost and Benefit of Reunification). <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/society/view/2012/01/31192/>, accessed April 16, 2021.

26 *Seoul Kyungje*. 2011. “통일 비용 부각땀 급락 올수도 (An Over-Emphasis Could Cause a Sudden Drip of the Stock Price).” December 21, <https://www.sedaily.com/NewsView/1HOZA5F177>, accessed April 15, 2021.

North Korea has been a key geopolitical risk for the Korean stock market. The reunification is likely to rectify this.

Professor Ahn Chang-Nam, a tax expert, has provided an analogy of the cost of surgery for a sick child compared to the divided Korean peninsula, causing high costs and risks. He argues that no parents will give up on their sick child who requires expensive surgery, and the parents know their recovered child will bring them happiness well beyond their imagination.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, South Koreans seem to question what the immediate losses and benefits for them would be, and what taxes they would have to pay in the present. They think that reunification would bring many benefits to fellow Koreans in the North and little for “me.”<sup>28</sup> KBS TV reports a view from a citizen, Ihm Jeong-Hyun, that “the reunification is certainly the way to go, but there is a disadvantage to the South as well.” Professor Kim Yong-Hyun notes that in the wake of the North-South Summit in 2018, South Koreans are ambivalent between anticipation and the burden of paying the costs.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, a survey of 1,000 adults, 19-years and older, reports that 31 per cent of those in their 20s to 40s have chosen economic growth out of a few options as the first reason for reunification and that 44 per cent of those in their 50s and 60s have chosen “the same ethnic people” as the first reason.<sup>30</sup>

### People’s Consensus Is a Key

Preparing an adequate fund to support reunification is crucial. However, preparation without people’s clear awareness and vision is problematic. A sense of a supportive climate at the grassroots level is required. There has been limited people diplomacy between the North and South. There is ideological division about North Korea and reunification in the South, making it challenging to generate a national consensus. Reunification and

27 *Asia Kyungje*. 2021. “통일비용과 통일세, 남북이 함께 조성하자” (Reunification Costs and Tax: Can the North and South Collaborate on This?). January 29, <https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2021012913003009358>, accessed April 16, 2021.

28 *Seoul Sinmun*. 2018. “[나에게 통일이란] 통일세 도입엔 아직 냉랭... 75%, 지갑 연다면 年 10만원 이하” (Still Indifferent to Reunification Tax... 75% of Those Willing Would Contribute Less Than \$100 Per Year). July 18. <https://www.seoul.co.kr/news/newsView.php?id=20180718005005>, accessed April 18, 2021.

29 KBS TV. 2018. 통일 의식 조사, 北 호감 ↑ 통일 필요성 인식 ↓” (A Survey of Reunification Awareness: Good Feeling About North Korea Up, Awareness of the Need of Reunification Down). August 15. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9CUAF6lQhk>, accessed April 18, 2021.

30 *Seoul Kyungje*. 2014. “통일에 대한 인식도 세대차이” (Generation Difference of Reunification Awareness).” April 8, <https://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=100&oid=011&aid=0002495483>, accessed April 18, 2021.

the fund to support it should be a bi-partisan matter but continues to be politicized. Lee Myung-Bak government's attempt to create the reunification tax without people's consensus faced a backlash and finished with little achievement. There are numerous cultural challenges to overcome.

In addition to the economic burden to meet the cost of reunification, the seventy-year division has caused differences in the language, culture, and political systems. Reunification may cause high unemployment, crimes, and social unrest.<sup>31</sup> South Korean democracy and North Korea's totalitarian dynasty may be difficult to reconcile. How can reunification be possible unless one side gives up power? North Korea is now nuclear-armed.<sup>32</sup> A national survey indicated that South Koreans consider ideological differences (89.5 per cent) and cultural and customs differences (74.9 per cent) to be obstacles to reunification and that half the respondents (51.3 per cent) thought that reunification would worsen class hierarchies.<sup>33</sup> According to Kim Yong-Hyeon, a reunification expert, in order to minimize the cost and reduce social conflicts, a gradual but constant effort for North-South cooperation can absorb the shocks well before the eventual reunification.<sup>34</sup>

The Lee Myung-Bak government labelled the previous two progressive governments "the wasted decade" and described Kim Dae-Jung's Sunshine Policy as no more than unconditional support diplomacy. Then, President Lee Myung-Bak raised the need to introduce a reunification tax when there was great tension between the North and South. Opposition parties and political commentators had difficulties understanding Lee's underlying thoughts and assessed them to be reckless.<sup>35</sup> Political parties hastily discussed how to create a reunification tax without a due public debate.<sup>36</sup> The important issue of reunification has been turned into a matter to gain political advantages. The culture of a top-down approach rather than being prepared to listen to

31 *Financial News*. 2015. "무리한 증세는 역효과... 금융정책시스템부터 정비해야" (Unreasonable Tax Brings a Reverse Effect... Financial System to Be Maintained First). January 29, <https://busan.fnnews.com/news/201501291743135994>, accessed April 19, 2021.

32 *Gyeonggi Ilbo*. 2018. "분단 73년, 평화로 패러다임 대전환 필요" (Divided for 73 Years, A New Paradigm for Peace Is Required). August 8, [http://www.kyeonggi.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1506606&replyAll=&reply\\_sc\\_order\\_by=I](http://www.kyeonggi.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1506606&replyAll=&reply_sc_order_by=I), accessed April 19, 2021.

33 *Seoul Sinmun*. 2018. "통일세 도입엔 아직 냉랭... 75%, 지갑 연다면 年 10만원 이하." July 18.

34 *Seoul Sinmun*. 2018. "통일세 도입엔 아직 냉랭... 75%, 지갑 연다면 年 10만원 이하." July 18.

35 *Jeonbuk Domin Ilbo*. 2011. "개콘보다 더 웃기기" (Ridiculous More Than a Comedy). July 27, [https://www.domin.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=829353&sc\\_section\\_code=S1N2](https://www.domin.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=829353&sc_section_code=S1N2), accessed April 19, 2021.

36 *Segye Ilbo*. 2011. 통일비용 걱정할 필요 없다" (No Need to Worry About the Reunification Costs). August 17, <https://m.segye.com/view/20110816004548>, accessed April 19, 2021.

the grassroots is of little help. This is not desirable leadership when there are other challenging geopolitical situations.

Instead, there have been many talks with little action. The reunification and the costs are ignored due to other urgent matters such as increasing welfare costs, and the costs and issues associated with low birth rates and aging populations.<sup>37</sup> The experts noted the importance of people's consensus and participation in the whole preparation process; however, such an effort was lacking. Nevertheless, the movement to save the fund, called the Reunification Pot, attracted donations from more than 100,000 people and accumulated about \$1 million. Under the Park Geun-Hye government, the discussion of the reunification fund disappeared. As the Reunification Pot was not utilized, a donor retracted his/her donation of \$96,000. This is how "the Reunification Pot was broken."<sup>38</sup> It has been repeatedly argued that national leadership is required to persuade the people and engage them with the reunification movement.

### Diverse Anticipations towards Reunification

With the flow of time since the Korean War, different models of reunification have been suggested. However, South Koreans perceive the reunified nation-state as similar to Germany. When South Koreans were provided with a few models of reunification in a 2014 survey, 43.4 per cent chose "one state two systems," 22.9 per cent "free visits between the North and the South," and 33.7 per cent chose a complete reunification.<sup>39</sup> In fact, different generations have different preferences towards reunification. Younger generations generally prefer the peaceful coexistence of the North and the South over a complete reunification. This implies that reunification needs to be redefined in a broadly acceptable way to South Koreans.<sup>40</sup> Yu

37 *Financial News*. 2011. "[김정일 사망] 통일후 첫 1년간 최소 27兆필요...간접세·복권 등 거론" (\$27 Billion Required in the First Year of Reunification... Indirect Tax and Lottery Ticket Discussed as the Ways to Support). December 20, <https://www.fnnews.com/news/201112201732159801>, accessed April 20, 2021.

38 *Segye Ilbo*. 2020. "MB때 '통일항아리' 반짝 모금운동... 사회적 논의 실종 [신통일한국으로 가는 길]" (Reunification Pot as a Brief Movement of Fund Raising... Public Discourse Missing). January 12, <http://m.segye.com/view/20200109517880>, accessed April 20, 2021.

39 *Seoul Kyeongje*. 2014. "한반도경제포럼, '사회통합 등 여건 성숙 안돼... 통일 11년 이상 걸릴 것' 64%" (Korean Peninsula Economic Forum, 'Social Integration and Required Conditions All Immature'... 64% says, Reunification Won't Be Possible in 11 years). September 4, <https://www.sedaily.com/NewsView/1HKUKIG75A>, accessed April 20, 2021.

40 *Aju Kyeongje*. 2020. "하노이 노딜후 통일 인식 하락세... '김정은 못믿어' 대북인식 악화" (Reunification Awareness Down After the Hanoi No-Deal... Decreased Trust in Kim

Ho-Yeol, a reunification expert, notes that “one state two systems” is likely to offer substantial cost savings and accompany a consequential effect of it and that South and North Korean politics could be integrated into one, but administration and economy could be under separate control, which may better suit the North’s adjustment to a gradual change.<sup>41</sup> Professor Moon Chung-In aptly reminds us that South Korea cannot impose reunification, but can only be achieved by the North-South cooperation. Moon also notes that cooperation between the two Koreas, and South Korea’s development of the infrastructures in and out of Korea to encourage North Korea to come to the negotiation table must precede the reunification.<sup>42</sup>

Moon Chung-In recalls that former East and West Germany, following their Basic Treaty in December 1972, pursued interactions and cooperation and that West Germany provided East Germany with a development fund of \$32 billion before the reunification. In this respect, the German reunification was carefully prepared and negotiated.<sup>43</sup> If North and South Korea could interact with each other, especially if North Korea gives up the nuclear programme and opens up its economy to the international community to bring in international investments, this would be a stimulus for the North Korean economy and a gradual and desirable future reunification.<sup>44</sup> President Kim Dae-Jung’s Sunshine Policy most represents this German model of gradual reunification.<sup>45</sup> How to keep the momentum to pursue this peaceful and desirable method remains a complex task in the geopolitical context. For example, according to a 2018 survey, younger Koreans in their 20s are concerned about the neighbouring superpowers’ positions on reunification. Nearly 50 per cent (46.7 per cent) of the respondents think the United States does not want the reunification of two Koreas, and 70.1 per cent, 73.9 per cent, and 63.3 per cent of the respondents, respectively, think China, Japan, and Russia do not want the reunification.<sup>46</sup>

Jongun and Perception of North Korea Worsens). June 25, 2021, <https://www.ajunews.com/view/20200625201827985>, accessed April 20, 2021.

41 *Money Today*. 2011. “현인택, 통일 로드맵, 5월이면 나와” (Hyun In-Taek, Reunification Roadmap to Be Out by May). February 28, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2011022817221075613&outlink=1&ref=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.daum.net>, accessed April 20, 2021.

42 *Joongang Ilbo*. 2011. “통일 논의 상식과 순리 따라야” (Reunification Debate to Be Based on Common Sense and Reason). January 24, <https://news.joins.com/article/4964905>, accessed April 20, 2021.

43 *Joongang Ilbo*. 2011. “통일 논의 상식과 순리 따라야.”

44 *Herald Kyeongje*. 2011. “통일재원 어떻게? ...통일세 놓고 당정 미묘한 온도차.” February 28.

45 *Segye Ilbo*. 2011. “통일비용 걱정할 필요 없다.”

46 *Seoul Sinmun*. 2018. “청년들의 통일 인식, 10명 중 5명, 美도 남북통일 원할 것” (Young People’s Reunification Awareness: 5 Out of 10 Think the US Also Wants the Reunification). November 27,

In contrast to the peaceful and gradual reunification is an abrupt and sudden reunification, which partly characterizes the German reunification and is an expensive pathway. President Park Geun-Hye's phrase, "the reunification is an incredible fortune (통일은 대박)," was a populist and empty comment. Professor Jin Chung-Kwon interpreted the comment to imply that despite all possible disruptions, the reunification by absorption must proceed; short-term confusions ought to bring about long-term fortunes, and there is no need to fear reunification. In brief, Jin contends that the desire to see the North's collapse as a shortcut to achieving reunification is a fantasy.<sup>47</sup> Strongly wishing the reunification, many South Koreans often expressed their wish to see the North Korean regime collapse. Any prediction on the possible collapse is hard; however, it is unlikely, and the regime may instead strengthen over a period.<sup>48</sup> In fact, some conservative scholars predicted the downfall of North Korea within five years after the death of Kim Il-Sung in 1994, which proved to be wrong. Professor Kim Keun-Sik observes that the Lee Myung-Bak government anticipated the pressure to and isolation of North Korea would make it surrender, which proved wrong again.<sup>49</sup> Ethno-nationalism is a fundamental element to initiate reunification, and the market economy and democracy are the preconditions for any dialogue for reunification. However, reunification by absorption is a prevailing thought for some political leaders; however, it is unlikely. Even if the North Korean regime falls, its sovereignty will survive and is the counterpart, with which South Korea will negotiate the reunification.<sup>50</sup> I think it may be inevitable that the eventual Korean reunification will be both gradual and abrupt in its characteristics in terms of time and process, and South Korea has to prepare for both, together with the required funds.

<https://www.seoul.co.kr/news/newsView.php?id=20181128003006>, accessed April 21, 2021.

47 *Hankook Ilbo*. 2014. "진중권, 北 붕괴하면 통일된다는 인식은 환상" (Jin Jung-Kwon, It's a Fantasy to Think the Collapse of the North Regime Leads to Reunification). January 23, <https://m.blog.daum.net/garisan/15749037>, accessed April 21, 2021.

48 *Segye Ilbo*. 2015. "학생들에게 어릴때부터 통일에 대한 긍정적 인식 심어줘야" (Need to Educate the Young People with the Positives of Reunification from Their Young Age). December 22, <http://m.segye.com/view/20151222003583>, accessed April 21, 2021.

49 *Kyunghyang Sinmun*. 2011. "연평도 이후, 긴장의 한반도: 종합위기세트" (Since the Yeonpyeong-do Incident: The Korean Peninsula under Crisis in Every Dimension). January 4, <http://weekly.khan.co.kr/khnm.html?mode=view&artid=201012301100041&code=113>, accessed April 21, 2021.

50 *JoongAng Ilbo*. 2011. "통일 논의 상식과 순리 따라야"

## Want the Reunification, but Don't Want to Pay for It

What contributions are the people prepared to make? Limited public awareness of the complexity of reunification and geopolitical fluctuations remain obstacles. Ongoing media messages promoting an economically challenging time do not help (Han 2019: Ch.3). A good portion of people positively acknowledge the need for reunification, but their willingness to pay the costs is a different matter. No one can blame them as they strive to make ends meet. As noted, national leadership needs to handle the reunification discourse better.

People are diverse in terms of how they want to contribute to reunification. It is worth citing an amazing story from grassroots in Goheung Town in Jeolla-Namdo Province. Thirty-three older persons, including Kim Gap-Su (82-years-old), accumulated \$22,000 due to their ongoing saving of 30 cents per day, the worth of a cup of coffee from a vending machine. Each person saved up to \$9 per month, and their saving continued for four years. Some members put aside part of the monthly pocket money they received from their children, and others brought their earnings from selling the vegetables. These older people dream of being able to pass down the reunified Korea to the next generation, and they are determined to continue saving till their dreams come true.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, Hong Soon-Jik, an economist, points out that the majority of Koreans agree with the need for reunification and also creating of a tax, but 93.7 per cent of the survey participants want to contribute less than \$100 per year, i.e., less than \$10 per month, which he calls a phenomenon of NOOMP (Not Out of My Pocket).<sup>52</sup>

At the time of the 2018 North-South Korean Summit, according to a 2018 May survey, 70.7 per cent of the respondents across different generations agreed to contribute to reducing the gap in living standards in the North and South. This increase in the supportive attitude is based on the assumption of an increase in shares and stock values in the event of reunification. That is, reunification was considered a stimulus for economic opportunities.<sup>53</sup>

51 *Joongang Ilbo*. 2012. “통일기금 2200만원 모은 고흥 노인 33인” (Goheung’s 33 Older Koreans: Saving a Reunification Fund of \$22,000). <https://news.joins.com/article/8013742>, accessed April 22, 2021.

52 *Seoul Kyungje*. 2014. “통일세 연 10만원 이하가 적당” (Reunification Tax, About \$100 is the Right Amount). September 4, <https://www.sedaily.com/NewsView/1HSFQKU1TZ>, accessed April 22, 2021.

53 *Seoul Sinmun*. 2018. “통일 인식 달라져... 30~50대 더 적극” (Perception of Reunification Is Changing... People in 30s to 50s Are More Interested Than Others). May 10, <http://www.seoul.co.kr/news/newsView.php?id=20180510005002>, accessed April 23, 2021.

Similarly, in a 2018 November survey, 53.5 per cent of the respondents were willing to pay a reunification tax, whereas 42.3 per cent were not. More than 60 per cent (63.6 per cent) were interested in reunification, and 36.7 per cent were not.<sup>54</sup> However, following the Hanoi No-Deal at the 2018 Kim-Trump Summit, a 2018 survey reports that 47.3 per cent of 1,011 participants responded that they, especially those in their 20s and 30s, are against reunification, which is an increase from 36 per cent in 2016. About 30 per cent (29.2 per cent) responded that reunification may be possible in twenty years from the time of the survey, and 26 per cent responded it is not possible.<sup>55</sup>

From my news analysis, it is apparent that a supportive climate with the North-South dialogue and a hopeful public discourse can easily swing the public support, and this is what the national leaders have to manage and steer the mass with. There is broad agreement that there is little preparation for reunification, which could be disastrous. Instead, the government or political leaders are cautious in contributing to the public discourse and awareness, saving them from political risks. In addition, political leaders' less proactive approach and people's reluctance to pay for the reunification cost are affected by the ongoing economic uncertainty based on the sluggish economy after the high-growth rates in the 1970s and 1980s. The media's sensationalizing of the sluggish economy, and negative reports on the possible impact are also related (Han 2019, Ch.3). Germany's experience of a high cost of reunification seems to negatively impact the Korean grassroots' perception of reunification. As noted, the majority of grassroots Koreans see the benefit for the nation, but not for themselves. Hong Yong-Pyo, the Minister of Reunification, assumes the young people's position is as follows: "As I live a comfortable life with a good job, I don't see a point of seeking the reunification."<sup>56</sup> In this environment, Hana Financial Management

54 *Seoul Sinmun*. 2018. "청년들의 통일 인식: 청년층, 경제·안전 위해 통일 필요... 절반 이상 통일세 내겠다" (Young People's Perception of Reunification: Reunification Is Required for the Sake of Economy and National Security... Half the Population Willing to Pay the Reunification Tax). <https://www.seoul.co.kr/news/newsView.php?id=20181128003004>, accessed April 23, 2021.

55 *JoongAng Ilbo*. 2019. "통일해야 한다, 인식 50.8%...2년새 11%p 하락" (50.8% Agree Reunification is Essential... 11% Decrease in 2 years). <https://news.joins.com/article/23592865>, accessed April 23, 2021.

56 *Kookmin Ilbo*. 2015. "통일 논의 가능하다면 남북 정상회담도 가능, 홍용표, 지뢰도발로 北대화제의 시간 걸릴듯" (If the North and South Are Willing to Discuss Reunification, the Inter-Korea Summit Should Be Possible as Well; Minister Hong Yong-Pyo Says, the North's Minecraft Provocation to Make Their Response Slow to the South's Request for a Dialogue). August 16, <http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0009755532&code=6111111&sid1=i>, accessed April 23, 2021.



Research Institute suggests that a method of saving the reunification cost is to establish a Reunification Lottery ticket, of which advantage is not establishing a reunification tax.<sup>57</sup> To me, such a method is the epitome of calculated nationalism in the context of a free market, representing the willingness to donate only if there is personal benefit.

Karl Friedhoff in the Asian Institute for Policy Studies points out that young Koreans in their twenties regard themselves as individual “citizens” rather than as part of ethno-nationalism. Observing North Korea’s aggression, such as the attacks on the ROKS Cheonan Corvette and Yeonpyeongdo Island, they question, “Why should we try so hard to reunify with those who threaten us with death?” This questioning implies that reunification may not be a priority when they have the authority to make decisions on national policies.<sup>58</sup> This aligns with Emma Campbell (2016) anticipating limited scope for the peninsula’s reunification due to the young people’s adoption of individualism rather than continuing collective and communal values to embrace fellow North Koreans. On the other hand, at the time of the friendly April 27 Inter-Korea Summit in 2018, a survey of 5,274 students at primary, middle, and high schools reported that what they most like to try for reunification is a railway trip through North Korea, China, Russia, and to Europe.<sup>59</sup> Young people hope to ride the “reunification train” without purchasing a ticket. Some may be concerned about younger generations’ thoughts on reunification. Notably, a good proportion of those in their 20s–30s and 50s–60s share their somewhat indifferent attitudes to reunification and complacency with the current status.<sup>60</sup> A positive side is that the public is aware of their apparent lack of interest in reunification despite its importance and the topic has to continue to be discussed in the public discourse.

57 *Digital Times*. 2015. “하나금융경영연구소: 통일자금 복권사업으로 총당 가능” (Hana Finance Management Research Institute: Lottery Ticket Business Can Meet the Reunification Costs). July 7, [http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article\\_no=2015070702109958739005](http://www.dt.co.kr/contents.html?article_no=2015070702109958739005), accessed April 23, 2021.

58 *MBC*. 2014. “한국 20대, 통일이 필요하다는 인식 약해져” (Koreans in 20s Now Perceive of the Less Need for Reunification). May 9, [https://imnews.imbc.com/news/2014/world/article/3459983\\_31662.html](https://imnews.imbc.com/news/2014/world/article/3459983_31662.html), accessed April 28, 2021.

59 *Hankook Kyungje*. 2018. “초중고교생 73%, 통일 긍정적으로 인식... 90%가 남북정상회담으로 남북관계 개선됐다고 생각” (73% of Primary, Middle and Highschool Students Perceive Reunification to be Positive... 90% of Them Think the Inter-Korea Relations Have Improved). May 18, <https://www.hankyung.com/society/article/2018051884101>, accessed April 29, 2021.

60 *Maeil Kyungje*. 2013. “2030 vs 5060 인식 비교해보니” (People in Their 20s and 30s vs. 50s and 60s: A Comparison of Their Perception of Reunification). January 7, <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/economy/view/2013/01/12613/>, accessed April 29, 2021.

## Fluctuating Feel about Fellow North Koreans and Reunification Tax

Depending on North Korea's activities, such as North Korea's nuclear test or North Korean delegates' visit to the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, South Koreans feel differently about North Korea, reunification, and the tax. When Kim Jong-Il died, South Koreans thought reunification was at the doorstep, and the whole nation of South Korea seemed enthusiastic. However, when the urgency went, it subsided quickly, rather than continuing the preparation consistently. That is, the debate heats up quickly and cools down quickly with no effective action plan. Nonetheless, there seem to be understandable reasons as discussed.

According to an analysis of social media-based big data, the social media news is encircled by reunification as the national fortune, the North-South Korea Joint Statements, and the reunion of separated families after decades. This news then significantly affects the media consumers' support of reunification. The support rate is 4.57 times more than the situation in which those news items are not mentioned. Similarly, when social media is exposed to the North's nuclear programme, the sinking of the ROKS Cheonan Corvette, reunification cost, the media consumers oppose the reunification 5.92 times more than otherwise.<sup>61</sup> C&R Research reports that the 2018 North-South Summit and the improved inter-Korea relationships significantly influenced South Koreans' level of affection towards the North Korean regime, increasing from 1.8 per cent in 2017 to 20.6 per cent in 2018. The Summit also increased the anticipation rate in having the North's nuclear programme resolved, to 55.3 per cent or by 30 per cent. Curiously, those who responded positively to survey questions that reunification must occur (20.4 per cent) and reunification is better, if without too much burden (45.6 per cent), have decreased from 72.7 per cent in 2017 to 66 per cent in 2018.<sup>62</sup> I think much calculation of the cost-benefit is in the minds of South Koreans. The inter-Korea summit and the Northern delegates' visit to the South relieved South Koreans from the fear of war. They also develop some degree of trust in the North Korean regime. However, many

61 *Herald Kyungje*. 2016. "소셜 빅데이터로 본 통일인식, 박근혜 정부 출범후 통일찬성비율 낮아져" (Perception of Reunification Through Social Big-Data, Support for Reunification Is Down Since the Inauguration of President Park Geun-Hye). October 30, <http://biz.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud=20161029000001&cpv=1>, accessed April 27, 2021.

62 *KBS*. 2018. "2018 통일의식 조사...北 호감 급상승, 통일 필요성 인식 줄어" (A 2018 Survey on the Perception of Reunification: Affectionate Feeling Towards the North Sharply Increases, the Necessity for Reunification Decreases). August 15, <https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=4024757>, accessed April 27, 2021.

South Koreans want peaceful relationships to remain, but do not want to proceed to reunification as they fear the high cost of it.

While the views of news reports are not the same as those of grassroots, some reports seem to represent the latter closely. The Institute of Peace Affairs surveyed 1,008 persons (19-years-old and older) in 2011 and reported that 58.4 per cent felt North Korea as part of the Korean people in the past, but not anymore and that they felt North Korea seemed to be as foreign as China. In regard to fellow North Koreans, 52.9 per cent of the survey respondents regarded them as “the same people as us” belonging to one ethnic group (동포), and 38 per cent were willing to pay the reunification tax.<sup>63</sup> Kim Han-Ki, a columnist, contends that South Koreans believe that reunification has to be achieved. Citing the information that 80 per cent of East Germany and 82 per cent of West Germany consider their reunification positive twenty years after the incident, Kim concluded that the same applies to both Koreas, and their reunification is a must. This indicates that the need for reunification is deep-seated in the Korean psyche. Kim goes on to cite some experts saying that the reunification could come much earlier than thought and argues that the initial costs of reunification have to be ready together with a longer-term plan to finance the reunification process. Kim makes further comments which are based on ethno-nationalism as follows:

Reunification is an ethno-national priority, and its costs should not be at the centre of public debate. It is an investment opportunity for our people. ... New Germany has now been created after a generation of Germans paid an astronomical cost, which was painful. Most Germans are proud to have paid the cost to offer freedom to their 15 million brothers and sisters in East Germany. We could take up the lesson from the German experience. Reunification is not simply about a territorial reunion, but a political, economic, and cultural reunion so that we could create a recalibrated nation-state. North and South Koreans are coming to feel that they are the same people in their hearts; that is the reunification we aim for. Reunification will come only if we work for it.<sup>64</sup>

I think a good proportion of South Koreans, including young people, despite the broad trend of calculated nationalism, would not totally ignore these sentiments, which indicates that ethno-nationalism is not dead. Public debate

63 *Kookje Sinmun*. 2011. “발언대, 남북통일, 민족끼리 풀어야 할 과제” (Expression of Views: Reunification Is for the Koreans to Resolve). September 6. Source: KINDS.

64 *Kookje Sinmun*. 2011. “발언대, 남북통일, 민족끼리 풀어야 할 과제.”

on reunification needs to continue. One such effort is the Grand Debate for Awareness of Reunification, which is an annual event for primary, middle, and high school students to debate and raise awareness of reunification as they will make the backbone of a reunified Korea. It is hosted and supported by Korean Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation and co-hosted by different organizations such as universities. In its second convention in 2015, 96 teams consisting of 288 students from throughout the nation participated. Two primary school teams at the final round debated against and in support of the question, “Do we have to reopen the North Korea tour programmes?” Two teams of high school representatives debated the question, “Does the government have to put aside a portion to the reunification fund?” News report of the occasion indicates that the final teams demonstrated a high standard in their understanding of the complexity of reunification. A winning middle school team member, Kang Won-Jung, noted that he participated because he aspires to a reunified Korea. Lee Seong-Heon, a co-chair of the Council, hoped that the participants become more aware of the reunification and be an active part of the preparation. The seventh convention took place in 2020.

The Centre for Unified Korean Future was built in Yeoncheon close to the DMZ in August 2014. The Centre aims to facilitate exchange programmes, especially for young people between the North and South, to learn and consider what a unified Korea might be like. North Korean Boys Football team and their counterpart from the South had a game in Koonming, China in 2008, Yeoncheon in 2014, Pyongyang in 2015, etc., some of which were at the time of great tension between the North and South.<sup>65</sup> Many constructive academic seminars contribute to public debate about and awareness of reunification, e.g., “2011 Academic Seminar for Reunification and Security,” Choongnam University, August 26. Jeong Ju-Shin argued that finding the best ways to support North Korean defectors’ settlement in South Korea would be an asset to deploy at the time of the reunification. According to Kim Chang-Hee, being able to place the notion of reunification at the centre of public discourse is a great starting point to facilitate diverse views on reunification to debate and negotiate. Kim Keun-Sik argued for the

65 *Kyunggi Ilbo*. 2017. “청소년들 통일 인식 심고... 남북교류 확대 앞장, 한반도통일미래센터 3주년 기념식” (Encouraging Young People to Improve Their Perception of Reunification: Centre for Unified Korean Future 3rd Year Anniversary to Lead the North-South Exchanges). November 10, <http://www.kyeonggi.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1411775>; *Tongil Sidae*. 2018. “北 4·25유소년축구단 10년 카메라 앵글에 담다” (North Korean 4.25 Boys Soccer Group’s 10-Year Activities Filmed). Vol 146, No 12, <http://webzine.nuac.go.kr/tongil/sub.php?number=2208>, accessed April 28, 2021.

necessity for the progressives and conservatives to narrow the gap in their views on reunification.<sup>66</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

Since the Korean War, South Korea has gone through much change in its structure and culture. So have the wants of individual agents, depending upon what each individual agent has been through personally and nationally. In the early part of the 21st century, many older generations maintain ethno-nationalist sentiment as a reason for reunification. However, some older generations and a good proportion of younger generations think first about what dimensions of reunification will be beneficial or burdensome to them. That is, cost-benefit nationalism or calculated nationalism is a new form of nationalism firmly held. South Koreans are generally supportive and enthusiastic about reunification and willing to make a modest financial contribution to the costs of the reunification. However, their contribution is under the condition that there are national and especially individual benefits from costly reunification. In fact, their assumption of the national and individual benefit precedes their willingness to contribute. Their willingness to contribute fluctuates depending upon the national leadership and the (non)presence of North Korea's aggression, including nuclear tests.

For South Koreans, ethno-national sentiment is becoming an increasingly vague reason to support reunification. Costs and benefits are much more important in terms of their awareness of, and interests in, reunification. Individual interests seem much more important than broad-based national interests. Individuals hardly attempt to identify their personal interests with national interests, which typifies calculated nationalism. In this respect, "two systems in the peninsula" is a possibility, not the one system in one state (Kim 2017). National leadership is seriously required to facilitate the public debate on the realities of reunification. The public debate on the topic is only occasional at times of significant events such as the North-South summit, while such debate is the starting point to be ready for the reunification, which will be inevitably gradual as well as sudden. At the time of completing this chapter, South Korea is about to see the conservative People Power Party

66 *Daejeon Ilbo*. 2011. "대전일보 후원, 2011 통일안보 학술세미나" (2011 Reunification and National Security Academic Seminar, Sponsored by *Daejeon Ilbo*). August 27, [http://www.daejonilbo.com/news/newsitem.asp?pk\\_no=967692](http://www.daejonilbo.com/news/newsitem.asp?pk_no=967692), accessed April 28, 2021.

come to power. The president-elect has expressed a hard-line approach to the North and clouded the Korean peninsula peace process.

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# 6 The 2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution and Grassroots Nationalism

## An Analysis of Public Speeches at the Rallies

### Abstract

Chapter 6 analyses speeches by people from all walks of life at the rallies of the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*. As a group of progressive social actors, the grassroots speakers expressed their past, present, and future concerns about the Korean nation-state. But it is not only about the future of the nation-state per se; it is also about their individual life opportunities and concerns expressed as calculated nationalism.

**Keywords:** 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*, political campaigns, social structure, culture, agency

### Introduction

*The 2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution* was one of the most extensive campaigns for democracy in modern South Korea. Frustration over the misrule and creeping authoritarianism of the conservative Lee Myung-Bak and Park Geun-Hye governments increased before the protests began in October 2016, primarily but not only driven by those on the progressive side of politics.<sup>1</sup> Lee Myung-Bak had been accused of squandering public resources on

<sup>1</sup> In contemporary South Korea, the labels of “progressive” and “conservative” have developed particular connotations, and do not align with the traditional “left/right” divisions in liberal democracies. This is in large part due to the halting development of the two-party system in the context of the Cold War, which worked against the emergence of centre-left parties that could advocate for the rights of workers. Korean progressives are thus comparable to their centre-left counterparts elsewhere in the liberal-democratic world, but are relatively conservative. Korean conservatives are comparable to the most rigid form of conservatism in the democratic world. In this chapter, I follow the common public usage by Koreans.

the “Four Major Rivers Project” during his term as president (2008–2013), but most of the frustration stemmed from the alleged misrule of Park Geun-Hye (2013–2017). Her mishandling of the rescue of the *Sewolho*-ferry in 2014, for instance, resulted in the death of 304 people. South Koreans were also unimpressed by Park’s attempt to manipulate history textbooks to burnish the contributions of her father, who served as president from 1961 to 1979. It was her willingness to allow a long-term confidante, Choi Soon-Sil, to access the president to exercise undue influence over national affairs that provided the impetus for the *Candlelight* protests against the vested interest groups who have disproportionately benefited from economic development. A massive campaign to impeach Park began in the wake of the protests and other incidents. This campaign culminated in the decision by the National Assembly to send articles of impeachment to the Constitutional Court, and the Court’s upholding of one of these articles in March 2017.

The impeachment was an extraordinary event in Korean political history, and was driven by a widespread desire for genuine political change. Some 32 per cent of the Korean population attended at least one of the weekly rallies (Sonn 2017: 84), and millions more took part in online debates about the proposed impeachment (Lee et al. 2017). Some protesters made speeches to massive audiences, and their speeches offered direct insights into grassroots nationalism in contemporary Korea. The speeches reveal Koreans’ aspirations for society and a view of Korean nationalism from the “bottom-up” rather than the “top-down.” One of the most frequent questions they asked during the rallies was, “Is this even a proper country (이게 나라냐)?”, and the answer they arrived at was that Korea was not. So, in addition to demanding that Park resign, ordinary Koreans called for a better-functioning democracy and a fairer distribution of wealth. They wanted to play a part in shaping the future of society, rather than being passive and compliant recipients of a top-down process.

Specifically, the chapter aims to demonstrate how the intersections of structure, culture, and agency have promoted constructive change for political and economic development. As most Koreans perceive themselves as a mono-ethnic group, I also show the persistence of nationalism in mundane moments of social life, and the co-presence of Korea’s conventional ethno-nationalism and an emergent form of nationalism (a combination of calculated and globalized nationalism) in a crucial transitional phase of democracy and economic development. In this way, the chapter adds to the growing body of research about how nationalism is contested and shaped by both elites and ordinary citizens.

## The Grassroots Variant of Nationalism

Nationalism is a sense of “belonging to a common nation” and is “often associated with feelings of loyalty and patriotism *toward* the state” (Stacey 2018: 8, emphasis added). It encapsulates, *inter alia*, ideas about a nation’s “independence, self-reliance, integration, and glory” (Y. Kim 2016: 230) and provides “political, social (including moral), and cultural value to a nation or national identity, while simultaneously providing *obligations for members of the nation* in order to maintain and develop” (Stacey 2018: 8, emphasis added).

An ethno-nationalist view of the state emphasizes the significance of ancestry and culture to nationalism. Here, national identity is based on ethnicity and the assumption that most people believe their nation “is superior to all others” (Stacey 2018: 11). The ethno-nationalist interpretation sees a nation as an extended family (Muller 2008: 20). Koreans, for instance, have traditionally referred to their country as a *gukga* (“country-family”) and have depicted their nation as homogeneous (Campbell 2016) since the beginning of the 20th century. *Gukga* was not much used before the last decades of the 19th century. The counterweight to the ethno-nationalist view of the state is civic nationalism, which emphasizes the role of politics and communication in forming political entities that command loyalty from and provide a sense of belonging to a given population (Smith 2010). Herein, a common commitment to a particular form of political organization, such as democracy, or a set of values, such as liberty and justice, may provide the same binding force that “blood and soil” do for ethno-nationalism. Despite these divergent interpretations of how nations are formed, the concept of nationalism remains meaningful across the world, although it is unclear *why* it does so.

A significant development in the study of nationalism is the contention that the “everyday” or popular level matters. Rather than simply assuming that nationalism is developed by states from above (the elite level), there is a growing appreciation of the meaning of nationalism to ordinary people in the course of their daily lives. A “top-down” reading of nationalism suggests that political leaders “create a discourse with which people of different minds, differently located in a society, can feel comfortable” (Cohen 1996: 810). Leaders claim to know what people think and want, but this view of nationalism fails “to recognize the role of the ordinary person in taking the grand images presented by the leadership and recasting them in the more familiar terms of local experience” (Herzfeld 1992: 49, cited in Cohen 1996: 811).

In his influential treatise on “banal nationalism,” Billig (1995) noted how people invest meaning in common symbols such as national flags, displayed widely in society. National identity can be reflected in everyday aspects of popular cultures, such as the places people visit, the foods they consume, and the music and films they enjoy (Edensor 2002). Nationalism is thus quietly but persistently reinforced in mundane moments of social life and cultural activities.

Other scholars, however, have argued that this rendering of nationalism underplays the role of human agency. People are not simply passive receptors of nationalism, and “identification with national membership does not guarantee enthusiasm towards the nation and is not an indicator of nationalism, nor of nationalist sentiment” (Knott 2015: 12). Instead, through their “everyday” experience at the popular level, ordinary people help to shape the nation (Antonsich 2016) and their place in it. Therefore, a core objective of research into nationalism is to ask “ordinary people what the nation means to them” (Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008: 539). This is because not all aspects of nationalism are as easily detected as flags and food (Hearn and Antonsich 2018) and instead derive from people’s roles “on the ground” in society (Smith 2009). Their involvement in society gives them a degree of control over their lives and generates a sense of belonging and social purpose as part of a larger national entity (Hearn 2007). Societal citizenship is necessary for people to retain a sense of belonging to the nation; older forms of statist citizenship are no longer sufficient to ensure such loyalty and a sense of belonging (Donati 2016). In multiethnic and multifaith societies, markers such as language, ethnicity (Brubaker et al. 2006), and religion (Dempsey 2020) help to determine the degree to which people believe they belong to the nation or not. For instance, in Hong Kong, the notion of “Chineseness” shapes national and personal identity and what it means to be Chinese, a question that has taken on new meaning since the “return” of the territory to the mainland in 1997 (Ma 2007).

The focus on everyday experiences of nationalism has, in turn, underscored the salience of “micronationalism,” or how sub-national actors at the popular level create and contest nationalism. Rather than seeing nationalism as solely the product of actors at the elite or popular levels, there has been growing interest in the interaction between elites and the masses (see Smith 2009). In some cases, such as France, national elites have co-opted micro-national, localist demands for greater political autonomy (Keating 1985). In others, such as in postcolonial India, micro-nationalist projects have progressed alongside efforts by national elites to pursue their own nation-building projects (Baruah 1994). Elsewhere, as in Kenya, sub-national

political actors have gone so far as to launch micro-political campaigns to remake the nation through secession movements (see Saalfeld 2020).

A related sub-set of studies has focused on “grassroots nationalism,” or a highly *purposeful* form of micro-politics. Here, everyday nationalism is much more than the incidental and passive consumption of nationalist symbols and the terms offered by incumbent leaders, but rather a concerted effort by sub-national actors to make a difference in national politics. On the one hand, micro-nationalists may direct these efforts at what are perceived to be external enemies, and their campaigns may pressure elites into adopting a more extreme policy than they would have preferred. Examples of this type of grassroots nationalism include the push by right-wing groups in Japan for a more hard-line position vis-à-vis China on territorial disputes in the East China Sea (Pugliese 2015), and the campaign by Russia’s “Parents Movement” for greater protection of “traditional family values” in light of what the group saw as insufficient action by corrupt elites in the Putin government (Höjdestrand 2019). On the other hand, grassroots protesters may directly target the state and challenge the legitimacy of the incumbent government. This occurred in Korea both during the *Candlelight* protests (as this chapter discusses) and afterwards, when conservative activists challenged the legitimacy of Park Geun-Hye’s impeachment and the government that replaced her (see Han and Hundt 2021).

### *Grassroots Nationalism in Korea*

Following Korea’s independence from Japanese imperialism in 1945, there have been three successful significant mass uprisings for political democracy and economic democratization. First, during the *April 19 Revolution of 1960*, the grassroots protested against President Rhee Syngman’s autocratic rule, corruption, and uneven economic development. Rhee resigned and fled into exile in the United States. Yun Bosun replaced Rhee as president, and consequently, Major-General Park Chung-Hee led the *May 16 military coup d’etat* in 1961. Park ruled the nation under his iron fist for eighteen years, vigorously pursuing economic development as a way to legitimize his dictatorship. Park’s authoritarian rule halted the possible flow-on effect of the *May 68 Revolution* in France on the development of democracy in South Korea. Park’s assassination in 1979 brought in another brutal military leader, Chun Doo-Hwan, who in 1987 announced that he would not amend the Constitution to hand over the leadership to Roh Tae-Woo. The second mass protest at the national level was the *June Democratic Struggle* (1987), which was ignited by Chun’s announcement on the Constitution, the deaths of student activists, and the sexual assault of a female student activist. The protests



ended with the announcement that the Constitution would be amended to introduce direct popular elections for the president. Since the 1988 Seoul Olympics, South Korea has increasingly demonstrated its relatively mature democracy and its role as a middle power economy in the international community. However, in the rapid political and economic development of this postcolonial nation-state, some elite groups have continued to privilege themselves, creating vast disparities between the “haves” and “have-nots” in terms of life opportunities. The influence-peddling around Park Geun-Hye’s government epitomized the misdeeds of the vested interest groups, which ignited the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*, the third mass movement for democracy in Korea and the focus of this chapter.

In light of the national development trajectory, grassroots nationalism in Korea has emerged following the attainment of two significant socio-political transformations: democratization and economic development. In the wake of such society-wide transformations, it is perhaps unsurprising that there should be a desire for grassroots nationalism—that is, a renegotiation of the relationship between the state and society, and rulers and the ruled. Factors cited as conducive to grassroots nationalism include the changing attitudes of younger Koreans (Campbell 2015, 2016), and the embrace of a global consumer culture that could be considered somewhat at odds with traditional Korean society. Other scholars see the parallel embrace of distinctive North Korean and South Korean identities, and the gradual dissolution of overarching commitments to a more generic “Korean” identity (Won and Huntington 2021). The emergence of grassroots nationalism, and thus the desire by ordinary Koreans to reshape society from below and within, has implications for the prevailing ethno-nationalist concept of “our nation” (우리나라), and its “us-versus-them mentality” (Shin 2006). According to Kang Won-Taek, younger Koreans are beginning to base their identity on Korea as a political-legal *nation-state*, rather than the idea that Koreans in the North and the South, as well as Koreans outside the peninsula, are a unique *nation* who share the same blood (W. Kang 2006, 2011).

When Korean society was defined in terms of ethno-nationalism, Korean identity was understood in the same terms. However, the inclusion of temporary migrants or newly naturalized Koreans in the body politic has altered how ordinary Koreans relate to the state and has provided an opening for grassroots nationalism. As detailed in an earlier chapter, younger Koreans’ conception of nationalism differs from that of the older generation (Campbell 2015, 2016), so the reunification of Korea, based on shared blood, has less appeal to younger Koreans than to their older counterparts. Growing up in

conditions of political freedom and economic affluence has infused younger Koreans with what C. Brough Macpherson (1964) refers to as “possessive individualism” (see also Cohen 1996):

... the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but as an owner of himself ... Society consists of exchange between proprietors (Macpherson 1962: 3).

This chapter builds on Campbell’s (2016) “globalized cultural nationalism” by incorporating economic interests in its analysis of contemporary Korea. Globalized cultural nationalism applies not only to younger Koreans, but to all generations. For example, during the recovery from the Asian economic crisis, President Kim Dae-Jung adopted neo-liberal economic policies, and eschewed defensive forms of nationalism (Chön 2003: 48), to avoid a national default. The government asked workers to bear a “share of difficult times” and to endure long working hours and low salaries (Kwön 1994: 16; Chön 2003: 48). Most Koreans complied with this request, albeit reluctantly. Mass responses such as the “gold-collecting campaign” (H. Cheon 2017: 388)<sup>2</sup> were also expressions of grassroots nationalism during the economic crisis.

The *Candlelight Revolution* was a mass expression of grassroots nationalism. Noh Hyeong-Il and Yang Eun-Kyeong (2017: 16, cited in Jung 2017: 261–262) argue that Koreans attended the protests to achieve both national political goals and individualist ones. I argue that the grassroots nationalism practiced in contemporary Korea is “calculated,” in that it seeks to tell a story about the nation and address the concerns of individuals, especially younger Koreans. This new form of nationalism represents a shift away from ethno-nationalism, authoritarian politics, and the centralized and top-down model of economic governance that typified the previous era. In its place, younger Koreans, and those traditionally excluded or marginalized from political life, have pursued a new social contract with the state.

2 Following the Asian economic crisis, the IMF’s structural intervention to the Korean economy incurred \$304 billion in foreign-exchange debt. The gold-collecting campaign was a national movement in 1998 to pay back Korea’s national debt to the International Monetary Fund. They collected 227 tons of gold worth more than \$2.13 billion. See Kamran, Omair. 2020. “How Did Ordinary South Koreans Help Their Country during the 1997–1998 Financial Crisis?” *Siasat*, November 16, <https://blog.siasat.pk/ordinary-south-koreans-help-country-financial-crisis/>, accessed March 21, 2022.

### *A Critical Realist Approach*

An analysis of the purposeful form of micropolitics that grassroots nationalism entails implies a focus on both the top-down and bottom-up aspects of nationalism. That is, it needs to account for the structural and agential forces that shape nationalism. It also needs to account for the interplay between them, in the realm of ideas and culture, which have constitutive power too.

Structures produce cultures and ideas, which can reinforce or dismantle those structures. Culture and ideas, in turn, can (im)mobilize agents to call for and effect social change, which can then produce or reproduce structures. A critical-realist approach assumes that people have material interests and idealistic beliefs, which inform their expressed concerns which they translate into action (Porpora 2013). When people work together, they can reproduce or change the structures and culture of a society. In other words, structure and culture are two pillars that support society's democratic and economic development, and the third pillar to let it stand and continue to make progress is the agency of citizens. Collectively, these pillars are thus the essential components of an autonomous and sovereign society. How these three elements intersect can initiate either change or reinforce the status quo. How complex interconnections between socio-economic structure and culture can (im)mobilize and transform the properties of ethno-nationalism, as well as trigger the development of democracy and economic democratization in South Korea. In this respect, this chapter is an attempt to demonstrate how the structural conditioning of Korean society in recent decades has generated the emergent cultural properties, which in turn have mobilized the emergent personal properties to shape and change the structural and cultural properties. It was through the *Candlelight Revolution in 2016–2017* that these processes became apparent. The rallies reignited the development of democracy and economic development, which was in danger of being halted by influence-peddling.

In this chapter, I use Margaret Archer's critical realist depiction of social movements to analyse the *Candlelight* protesters' attempts to change Korean society's prevalent structures and culture. For Archer (1995, 1996), social movements are the process of interaction of structure, culture, and agency, which reproduce or transform society. The impetus for a social movement is the structural inequalities in society, especially those which become engrained over time. Structures, in turn, produce cultures and ideas which can either reinforce inequalities or potentially dismantle them. Informed by culture and ideas, meanwhile, agents can mobilize to call for and effect social change, which can result in the emergence of new or reformed structures.

Following Archer's (1995) morphogenetic approach, I follow analytical dualism in this chapter. Structure and agency are not separable from each other but dialectically inter-related, as are culture and agency. Nonetheless, structure and agency cannot be reduced to each other. Archer's analytical dualism avoids "upward conflation" (e.g., the methodological individualism by John S. Mill and Max Weber) which qualifies to represent the structure. It also discredits the practices of "downward conflation" (e.g., methodological holism) in that structure is extended to represent agency. Analytical dualism is also against "central conflation," which tangles structure and agency (e.g., Giddens' structuration theory). In this chapter, I separate structure, culture, and agency from each other for the purpose of analysis, and tease out the intersections that lead to either a change or status quo.

A critical-realist approach assumes that people act to address their needs and improve their life chances. They have material interests and idealistic beliefs, through which they express their concerns and translate them into action (Porpora 2013: 28). Concerted action can result in social change and the transformation of collective identity (Archer 1995: 255). Archer's depiction of social movements is therefore helpful in analysing how grassroots nationalism was translated into action during Korea's *Candlelight* protests.

The second source of insights comes from Smith's (2010) notion of *ethno-symbolism*, which emphasizes the importance of shared values, myths, and sentiments in the making of nations. Smith argues that symbols carry binding power because they are widely held, so the masses rather than only elites, matter. In keeping with the assumptions of ethno-nationalism, cultural identities have power in shaping national imaginaries, but Smith leaves open the possibility of social transformation too. Nationalism is thus socially constructed and based on a shared set of ideas and culture, albeit not endlessly malleable (Smith 2009). If culture is to be truly shared, then it is both a resource for and a constraint on elites seeking to lead and shape society. Ideas and visions for the nation must have "resonance" with a significant number of citizens (Smith 2009: 64), or risk being challenged from below by grassroots nationalists.

## Methods

This chapter is an ethnographic investigation, in that it analyses grassroots nationalism in the speeches given by Koreans during the *Candlelight* protests. A digital ethnographic approach, or "netnography" (see Kozinets 2002), is relevant when the subject of research is materials posted in online

communities and social media spaces, and the goal is to learn more about the symbols and meanings that online actors seek to convey through these materials. Through a passive and post-facto version of netnography, it is possible to observe and learn about political actors in a naturalistic and unobtrusive manner by *looking at* and *listening to* these actors (Winter and Lavis 2020).

Many of the speeches by participants in Korea's *Candlelight* protests were uploaded to websites such as YouTube. Since YouTube is the most inclusive, easily accessible, and popular site in Korea, it was chosen as the primary data source. I have used the search terms "*Candlelight* campaign to urge Park Geun-Hye to step down, civilian speeches" (박근혜 하야촉구 촛불 시민발언) to identify calls for change to Korean society by ordinary citizens. From an initial corpus of 100 speeches, those deemed of little relevance were discarded (i.e., those that were not by grassroots people), including those by prominent elites or politicians, and news reports about the protests. Other independent researchers' collection of "nine memorable speeches" (Park and Joo 2018) during the protests was used to supplement the search. The final result was a corpus of thirty-eight speeches uploaded to YouTube between October 2016 and March 2017.

I analysed the speeches in accordance with the principles of grounded theory methodology (Strauss and Corbin 1994). NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software package, was used to facilitate systematic coding and analysis. Content analysis was not a chosen method of analysis; however, NVivo indicated that the most frequently used terms were: Park Geun-Hye (n: 91), we (n: 75), Republic of Korea (n: 39), Choi Soon-Sil (n: 35), history (n: 28), our nation (n: 27), candlelight (n: 27), *Sewolho* (n: 25), step-down/resign (n: 25), democracy (n: 15), nation (n: 15), and state (n: 15). The first step in the data analysis was to use open-coding to break down sentences and paragraphs to identify concepts, events, and incidents. Second, I used axial coding to make connections between major (sub)categories by examining the conditions under which events occurred. The final stage was to select the core category and systematically relate it to other categories.

Before proceeding to the analysis, it is worth commenting on the people who gave the speeches (see Table 6.1). The speakers came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds: they came from both urban and rural areas, but like most Koreans, they mostly lived in or near big cities. Furthermore, there was diversity in terms of age, ranging from primary-school and university students to people aged 80 and over, which characterizes the protests' prevalence throughout the nation. However, most speakers were quite young:

more than half were school students at the time of the protests, making them younger than most Koreans. Similarly, the gender breakdown was somewhat skewed: there were more female participants than male (26 vs. 12). The speakers often mentioned their ages, employment status, and their residential towns. Otherwise, their ages provided in Table 6.1 are based on my visual assessments.

**Table 6.1 Speakers' Age and Gender Distribution**

Primary school	Middle & High school	University or 20s	30s to 50s	60s +	Total
6	16	6	6	4	38
m=0	m=5	m=2	m=5	m=0	m=12
f=6	f=11	f=4	f=1	f=4	f=26

Given the prominence of young people and women in the sample, the speeches analysed below offer a rare insight into grassroots nationalism on the part of Koreans who have traditionally not played influential roles in politics. In recent decades, Korean society has increasingly taken on the form of a set of “networked publics” with high rates of adoption of new communications technologies (Kim 2014). Compared to most countries, ordinary Koreans are highly adept at participating in public life, which might help to explain the prominence of younger people at the forefront of the *Candlelight* protests.

### **Structure: Seeking Remedies to Corruption, Abuse of Power, and Inequality**

The speeches by protesters during the *Candlelight* rallies had strong expressions of nationalism and patriotism but also dissatisfaction with numerous aspects of society. In this sense, the speeches accorded with grassroots nationalism, unwilling to simply accept the terms offered by elites and defer to the incumbent government. The speakers criticized the aspects of society that reinforced inequality, deep-rooted corruption, and the abuse of power. They were aware that these concerns had accumulated over decades, rather than being created by the Park Geun-Hye regime. If politicians did not change their behaviour, protesters said, it would be incumbent on protesters to enact change from below. For instance, Lee Jeong-A, a self-described “hermit homemaker,” said that the protests had forced her to leave her

comfort zone and become a “warrior against political corruption.”<sup>3</sup> In her speech, which took the form of a letter to President Park, she criticized the government for its complete lack of concern about the loss of 304 lives in the sinking of the *Sewolho*-ferry and the death of Baek Nam-Gi, a farmer who was hit by a police water cannon at a protest in late 2015. Lee said that Park was preoccupied with her cosmetic surgery, Korea did not need a puppet-like president with a “small brain,” and Park needed to be imprisoned. It is not only that the elites did not want to see especially major incidents such as mass protests that affected their political performances, but the grassroots did not easily forgive the elites’ corruption, self-serving, and indifference to the people/workers, who expected fair and adequate compensation for their contributions to the national economy.

Another speaker in her 20s attributed the misdeeds of the Park government to longstanding structural problems: “Korea [was] in crisis, or the so-called *Hell Chosun*,” a term used by young Koreans to describe a society that was failing to provide them with reasonable life chances.<sup>4</sup> She attributed Park’s lack of interest in the welfare of Korean citizens to the same authoritarian tendencies that had made governments of earlier decades indifferent to the deaths of protesting students, such as during the final phases of the democracy movement in 1987. The speaker argued that elites such as politicians, bureaucrats, and the media “benefited from being dominant groups” and were not subjected to accountability, like ordinary citizens.<sup>5</sup> A high-schooler, meanwhile, said that people who violated law and order should be brought to justice, but she worried that bodies such as the National Assembly, the Executive branch, and the Prosecution Service were not up to the task.<sup>6</sup> Si Eung-Soon, in her 70s, said that voters needed to

3 “부산 촛불집회 용감한 시민 할머니 외 3명 발언 모음 박근혜 그 XXXX, 발탁 서는 걸 좋아하는 우리나라 좋은 나라 청와대 비아그라 풍자, 어둠은 빛을 이길 수 없다” (*Candlelight Campaigns in Busan: Speeches by a Brave Grandma and Three Others*). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eF14W8Fxn8>, accessed November 1, 2018.

4 “부산 촛불집회 용감한 시민 할머니 외 3명 발언 모음 ...”

5 A reporter from the *Hanguk Ilbo* felt guilty after hearing about a high-school student who had planned to be a journalist but gave up that ambition after observing the media’s irresponsible and unprofessional conduct when reporting on the *Sewolho* sinking and its victims. See *Hanguk Ilbo*, April 14, 2019. “그날 우리는 왜 기레기가 됐을까, 5년 만에 꺼내는 세월호 취재 기자들의 이야기” (Why Did We Become Irresponsible and Unprofessional Reporters: The *Sewolho* Sinking Reporters’ Reflection). <http://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/201904122346023868> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIvdyPNsjMo&t=604s>, accessed April 14, 2019.

6 *Maeil Sinmun*. 2016. “대구 여고생 정권퇴진 연설 영상, 인터넷·SNS 통해 급속도로 퍼져” (A Daegu School Girl and Her Video Clip to Ask for Park’s Impeachment, A Fast Spread through the Internet and SNS). November 8, <https://news.imaeil.com/Society/2016110804273297793>, accessed November 1, 2018.

stop electing politicians who committed misdeeds in office.<sup>7</sup> The reforms that Korea needed could not be initiated from above due to endemic corruption, so they needed to be orchestrated from below by ordinary people. In the speeches, the grassroots were clearly aware of how the vested interest groups form a self-serving cartel and maintain the embedded inequality in the social structure, and they demanded that this inequality be addressed.

Speakers said corruption had been building for decades. It was not that Park was especially susceptible to corruption, but she had been exposed due to the *Sewolho*-ferry sinking and the Choi Soon-Sil-related influence peddling (H. Kim 2017). Choi even influenced the president's speeches and national security policy, and intervened in Park's relations with North Korea. A common refrain in the protests was to ask: "Is this a [proper] country (이게 나라냐)?" A fourth-year university student called for Park to be removed from office because she had gone "underground" and made no effort to rescue the sinking *Sewolho*-ferry victims, and because she did not care about low-income earners.<sup>8</sup> An 18-year-old student blamed politicians for the death of Baek Nam-Gi, the farmer who was hit by a water cannon during a protest in November 2015.<sup>9</sup> The student was upset that her father's taxes were being wasted on bribes paid to Choi Soon-Sil. Ahn Hye-Won, a primary schooler, said that at her school, "We were asked the question of who represents the Korean state and who the highest representative is. We responded straight away, 'Choi Soon-Sil'." Something that she'd thought could only happen in a movie or on TV had become a reality in Korea, and she asked Park: "Aren't you ashamed of all these [actions]?"<sup>10</sup>

Park's misconduct exposed the chronic collusion between politicians and business leaders that has long been a structural and intransitive feature of Korean society. Park was not the first president to take bribes while in office (Kang 2002; Choi 2018), but the egregiousness of her case motivated Koreans

7 See "[풀영상] (11.11) 박근혜 해야 촛불을 뜨겁게 만든 할머니의 입담" (Grandma's Power Speech to Heat Up the Candle to Bring Down Park)." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beNAhRhwsCE&t=1s>, accessed November 1, 2018.

8 "대학생 명연설! 바람이 불면 촛불은 번진다! 박근혜 해야하라! 김진태 사과해라!" (A Uni Student's Power Speech, The Wind Makes the Candlelight Wild, Kim Jin-Tae Should Apologise), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDRJHjuWz9Y>, accessed November 1, 2018. This link is no longer available.

9 "울다 웃다 진주 경해여고생 눈물의 자유발언" (A High-School Girl's Speech, Crying and Laughing). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fC4OXBQIzto&t=1s>, accessed November 1, 2018.

10 "대전 초등 6학년 학생의 촛불집회 명연설. 박 대통령보다 훨씬 낫네" (A Power Speech By a Primary-School Girl: Much Better than Park), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDoKC1SuRuk>, accessed November 1, 2018.



to call for genuine change during the protests.<sup>11</sup> Structure refers to “relations among social positions that human actors occupy” (Porpora 2013: 27), and Korean elites have been preoccupied with guarding their positions for their own benefits. In brief, while there have constantly been newly emergent structural properties, bringing about changes to the nation’s wealth, the distribution of wealth has been poorly managed, which has restricted the consequent emergent cultural properties. A structural concern in South Korea today is the increasing gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” not only in terms of income but also in assets such as real estate, which can be passed to the next generation.

### Culture: Humanizing Korean Nationalism

For the prominent scholar of nationalism Anthony Smith (2008), Asian societies, such as Korea, fit the description of “hierarchical nations,” in that there is a widespread belief that (usually older and male) political leaders are the “father of the nation” and citizens (especially younger and female ones) should defer to the state. Such deference has, of course, been sometimes enforced through violence and repression, but to a certain degree, citizens have been unwilling to challenge the prerogative of political leaders. It was, therefore, noteworthy that a constant refrain during the *Candlelight* protest was that the *culture* of Korean society—that is, the ideas that influence every life, such as the notion that leaders are worthy of deference, and that citizens should “know their place”—needed to change. The inequalities and unfairness discussed in the previous section were no longer tolerable and needed to be addressed. As I illustrate below, younger Koreans, from primary schoolers to university students, were prominent in making a case for a change to the ideational makeup of society, because they are the ones to inherit the future.<sup>12</sup>

Speakers claimed one of the effects of unequal social relations was the devaluing of human life. The *Sewolho* tragedy symbolized the Park government’s lack of concern for human life, and was a touchstone for younger Koreans. Guk Beom-Geun (20-years-old), who was of a similar age to the

11 “광화문 최강스타 등장, 핵 사이다” (A Gwanghwamun Speech Star). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbQKG8er\\_1Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbQKG8er_1Q), accessed November 1, 2018.

12 Primary-school students’ participation in political protests is not new to the *Candlelight* Protests. During the April 19 Revolution, the Rhee Syngman regime fired at the high school students protesting his engagement in election fraud. Primary-school students protested against that violent action.

victims of the *Sewolho*-ferry, was dismayed at Park's handling of the tragedy: "the Korean government did nothing to save their lives."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Cho-Won, a university student, argued that "when the 304 victims were crying for help, Park showed no trace of herself."<sup>14</sup> Despite the Park government's prolonged empty hope of rescuing the live victims from under the capsized ship for many hours, there was no hope for the victims' families, but only for the national leaders who kept passing on their responsibility to rescue the passengers from the sinking ship.

Equality became a catchcry for protesters, along with human life itself: the government had not practiced fairness, and speakers demanded that it be reconstituted as stipulated in the Constitution. Education and merit-based employment have been primary means for social advancement in Korea, but the increasing gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" has impaired this mechanism in recent years (Yang 2018). Those from underprivileged backgrounds suffer immensely from relative deprivation in attending a university, seeking jobs, finding a marriage partner, and purchasing a home. The declining value of learning in the labour market runs contrary to the Confucian values that partly underpin Korean society. Once again, younger protesters expressed this sentiment clearly. A ten-year-old girl pointed to the favouritism shown to Chung Yoo-Ra, Choi Soon-Sil's daughter, when she entered the prestigious Ewha Womans University. This primary schooler felt sorry for those who missed out on university admission due to such misconduct.<sup>15</sup> Entering a prestigious university can heavily determine one's life chances in Korea, but the standard rules did not apply to Chung, said other speakers.<sup>16</sup> Education as a critical component of Korean culture is indeed a key qualifying element to enable people to climb the social

13 "국범근 박근혜 퇴진 촉구 집회 연설 '분노하라' (대학 1학년)" (Guk Beom-Geun Speech to Call for President Park's Stepping Down, 'Rise Up'). The YouTube URL has become unavailable since its access on November 1, 2018. Guk's similar speech is found from "국범근 집회 자유발언 '여러분이 대한민국의 최종병기입니다!'" (Guk Beom-Geun Free Speech, 'You Are the Last Hope of the Nation'). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVAwSa-s1oI&t=46s>, accessed May 14, 2019.

14 "대학생 명연설! 바람이 불면 촛불은 번진다! 박근혜 해야하라! 김진태 사과해라! (초원씨)" (A University Student's Great Speech! The Wind Will Cause More Candlelights! President Park, Step Down! (Ms Cho-Won). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDRJHjuWz9Y&t=9s>, accessed November 1, 2018; "대학생 명연설! 바람이 불면 촛불은 번진다" (The Wind Makes the Candlelight Wild, Kim Jin-Tae Should Apologise). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDRJHjuWz9Y>, accessed November 1, 2018. This link is no longer accessible.

15 "대구 촛불집회 열살 초등학생의 발언. 명연설! 박근혜보다 백만배 낫네." November 26, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qtyoPzR2vU&t=15s>, accessed November 1, 2018.

16 "박사모 막말에 당찬 여고생 핵사이다, 핵주먹 날리다." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYpNPamGCH4>, accessed November 1, 2018.

hierarchy, and young people felt that the system was breaking down in front of them.

There was some evidence during the protests that the culture of Korean society was changing, and in the direction espoused by the protesters. Older Koreans tend to prefer a social order based on Confucianist human relations, which promotes a culture of downplaying the ideas and status of younger people, including students. However, during the protests, students expressed a strong love for and commitment to Korea, and older protesters appreciated the students' patriotism and intelligence. According to the *Maeil Sinmun*, "those young people make the future of this nation bright."<sup>17</sup> Young Koreans' contributions to the protests helped to instil new energy in, and provided new perspectives on, Korean nationalism. A senior high-school girl, for instance, said: "Our nation faced crises in the past, but we didn't lose confidence. Thus the Republic of Korea remains alive and well. We can overcome the current crisis. Fellow Koreans, the nation in action is alive!"<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, a woman in her mid-20s claimed that "[w]e must take care of the Republic so that we can proudly pass the nation to future generations ... let us ensure that we are a strong nation with a proud history."<sup>19</sup> The protesters demanded their own life chances on one hand, but were also determined to preserve a culture of fraternity within society that would benefit the broader population and future generations. I argue that this determination to care for fellow citizens was rooted in both Korean ethno-nationalism as well as calculated nationalism, insofar as it was intended to ensure the benefits for the whole nation and individual members.

Young Koreans called for the sanctity of human life to be restored as a traditional value during the protests, and some older participants expressed similar sentiments. A middle-aged man said that most Koreans believed in the value of human life, and that Park had violated this belief:

No matter how humble a person's life has been, we drop our heads in front of their death and express our condolences. Even when our authoritarian presidents died, everybody in the nation expressed sorrow. However, what

17 *Maeil Sinmun*. 2016. "대구 여고생 정권퇴진 연설 영상, 인터넷·SNS 통해 급속도로 퍼져."

18 "대구 고3의 똑 소리나는 '국민의 지고한 명이다, 박근혜는 퇴진하라'" (A Senior High-School Girl's Speech from Taegu: It's People's Order for Park to Step Down). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmEH38tqw8s&t=120s>, accessed November 1, 2018.

19 "부산 촛불집회 용감한 시민 할머니 외 3명 발언 모습 박근혜 그 XXXX, 발탁 서는 걸 좋아하는 우리나라 좋은 나라 청와대 비아그라 풍자, 어둠은 빛을 이길 수 없다." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eF14W8Fxn8>, accessed November 1, 2018.

happened to President Park's regime? They have ridiculed the death [of 304 people], and they couldn't care less.<sup>20</sup>

Some students focused on a specific instance of unfairness that affected them personally: the decision by Park to release an "official" history textbook, despite widespread opposition. Park intended to fold nine different history texts into one, which would be taught uniformly in Korean schools. School students, however, argued for their right to learn an undistorted and pluralist version of history. Lee Da-Hye, a high-school student, said: "President Park, we want to learn proper Korean history. There are bound to be diverse historical perspectives, not just one. I oppose the introduction of the official version."<sup>21</sup>

The reference to history, and the retelling of stories that all citizens are expected to agree upon, was significant given the status of Korea as a divided state in the Cold War era: since 1945, the Korean peninsula has been ruled by competing governments in Seoul and Pyongyang, both of whom make claims to be the sole legitimate ruler of all Koreans. The division of the peninsula, in turn, has resulted in South Korea being ideologically contested by political progressives and conservatives. As part of this division, conservatives label dissidents "commies" (빨갱이), and imply that they collude with North Korea. A 20-year-old speaker noted how this "commie discourse" had been deployed to disparage protesters at the *Candlelight* rallies:

The [conservative newspapers] *Chosun Ilbo* and *Dong-a Ilbo* are putting out numerous media articles supporting us [the candlelighters]. What did they write at the time of *minjung* [grassroots] demonstration and when the farmer Baek Nam-Gi was knocked over by the water cannon? The civilians were called pro-North Korean commies!<sup>22</sup>

Speakers at the rallies criticized the lazy and reflexive labelling of opponents to conservative governments as "communists" or "reds," and accused Park's ruling party of fighting a "culture war" against the *Candlelight* protesters rather than investigating misconduct by Choi Soon-Sil and other members

20 "[박근혜 하야 촉구 촛불] 11월 1일 시민 발언." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZXptl4OpjQ&t=114s>, accessed November 1, 2018.

21 "광화문 교복소녀, 작은 행동 큰 울림" (A School Girl In Uniform, A Small Action But a Big Touch of Mind). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Z9ArmScY8w&t=107s>, accessed November 1, 2018.

22 "국범근 박근혜 퇴진 촉구 집회 연설 "분노하라" (Guk Beom-Geun Speech to Impeach Park). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUB541ycR8c>, accessed November 1, 2018.

of the government.<sup>23</sup> Speakers claimed that so long as the outdated Cold War mentalities remained powerful in Korea, it would be difficult for Korea to advance as a society.

The opportunity to address political issues, such as influence peddling, drew people to the protests, but the grassroots campaign also had a festive quality. Korean social movements have become adept at using grassroots campaigns to achieve political goals, and their success has revealed the potential for what protests can achieve and how they should be conducted (Jeong 2005). It is worth noting that *Candlelight* protests in Korea started with the deaths of young Korean students Sim Mi-Seon and Shin Hyo-Sun, who were accidentally killed by an American panzer in 2002. Moreover, the emergence of the cows with foot and mouth disease in the United States in 2003 ignited a great deal of concern about the import of American beef in Korea at the time of negotiating the Free Trade Agreement between Korea and the United States in 2008, leading to massive *Candlelight* protests in Seoul.<sup>24</sup> A few characteristics of these *Candlelight* protests are festive, cultural, and nonviolent, which is a reason to have attracted a large number of young people and young mothers with children. The 2016–2017 *Candlelight* protests were “infectious” and attracted interest from across Korean society. A university student, for instance, said: “Kim Jin-Tae from the [ruling] Saenuri Party spoke against the candlelighters, that the candlelights will *be put out* when facing the wind. Let’s respond to him, “You better *be put out* [disappear, 꺼져] yourself.”<sup>25</sup>

Far from deferring to political leaders, speakers at the rallies ridiculed them and used their own words against them. Following the revelation of Park’s misconduct, for instance, the president made statements such as: “I’m mortified to think that I’ve become the president for this misery.” This statement sparked numerous parodies, including by young speakers at the rallies. Ahn Hye-Won, a primary-school student, said, for instance:

I’ve many friends, my juniors and seniors, working hard since they’re determined to serve the nation. Many attend extra-curricular academies till 10pm, come home, continue their homework, and fall asleep on the desk. However, since the national influence-peddling, I’ve asked myself,

23 “국범근 박근혜 퇴진 촉구 집회 연설—분노하라.”

24 Kim Sang-Jun (2009: 237) argues that discarding the significance of *Candlelight* protests on the basis of its ignition by the “mere” teen girls as whistle blowers is utterly outdated and missing the point.

25 “대학생 명연설! 바람이 불면 촛불은 번진다! 박근혜 하야하라! 김진태 사과해라! (초원씨).” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDRJHjuWz9Y>. Both “Be put out” and “Disappear” refer to the same Korean word.

“Why am I dreaming of serving this chaotic nation? I’m mortified to think that I’ve studied hard to serve this chaotic nation.”<sup>26</sup>

Most Koreans did not expect young people to demonstrate such a degree of political acumen and to play a role in calling for social change. The protests, however, amounted to a grassroots movement to change the ideas, values, and culture that inform Korean society and the nationalism it practices. The *Candlelight Revolution* was significant insofar as a sizeable proportion of Koreans, both young and old, were aware of the depths of the structural and cultural problems. They became politically aware and decided to participate in transforming society, that is, elaborating structural and cultural changes within their capacities.

### Agency: The Growth of Political Activism and Awareness

Agents are critical to the success of social movements, and interaction between various agents influences their “consciousness and commitments, affinities and animosities” (Archer 1995: 184, Horrocks 2009: 54). This was evident during the *Candlelight* protests in the prominent role played by people who would not usually be involved in political activity, including young people, women, and the elderly. The protests enabled these Koreans to become more involved in national politics, often for the first time in their lives.

In some cases, Koreans were casting themselves as agents for change despite not even having the right to vote. A 16-year-old student argued that “politics shouldn’t be made by ‘19+ adults only,’ should it? If the adults had better judgment and more responsibilities in action, the state of Korean politics wouldn’t have reached the chaos of today.”<sup>27</sup> She proceeded to make a case for the voting age to be lowered from 19 to 18 on the grounds that:

At the age of 18, one can marry, serve in the army and carry out many duties, but not vote. I’ve started questioning why this is the case and learned that many young people argue for the need to bring down the voting age.<sup>28</sup>

26 “대전 초등 6학년 학생의 촛불집회 명연설. 박 대통령보다 훨씬 낫네...”

27 “[촛불집회 16세 여고생] 정치가 19금은 아니잖아요!” (Interview with a High-School Girl: Politics Isn’t ‘Adults Only’). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdCGJtKqncA>, accessed November 1, 2018.

28 “[촛불집회 16세 여고생] 정치가 19금은 아니잖아요!”

This request was eventually legislated in 2019. Young Koreans expressed a vision for the future of society. By their mere presence in the protests, they were breaking new ground in Korea's history of social movements. The participation of school-aged children in public gatherings is generally discouraged and seen as a distraction from their studies, but this taboo appeared to weaken during the protests. This reflected the degree to which Koreans shared the belief that their society was on the wrong track. When asked whether her parents were worried about her participation in the protests, the above-quoted middle-schooler said:

My parents encourage me since I study hard and actively participate in the *Candlelight*. They're sorry not to join me [today] due to another commitment, but their mind is with me ... They're proud of me as I represent my family today.<sup>29</sup>

Some primary schoolers, meanwhile, were unusually adept at public speaking. Ahn Hye-Won, a student from Daejeon, opened her speech by saying, "Greetings! Despite the cold weather, many adults have been holding *Candlelight* demonstrations. This encourages me to come along for the sake of protecting the democracy."<sup>30</sup> When asked whether she understood why the *Candlelight* protests were being held, another student responded: "My classmates are well-informed about the basics of what the crux of the matters is about ... Choi Soon-Sil manipulated President Park."<sup>31</sup> These comments reflected a widely held belief that all Koreans had a stake in the health of their democracy, and could play a part in realizing change.

Younger people were not the only Koreans drawn into politics for the first time during the protests. Speeches by older Koreans were a source of inspiration, too, since it was commonly thought that most older citizens were politically uninformed, conservative, and resistant to change. Speeches by older Koreans were relatively simple but impactful, and resonated with other protesters. For example, a 90-year-old grandmother said, "I have flown from Cheju Island. Fellow Koreans, please make Park Geun-Hye step down."<sup>32</sup> Such a senior person flying from Cheju to Seoul to attend a protest represented an

29 "[촛불집회 16세 여고생] 정치가 19금은 아니잖아요!"

30 "대전 초등 6학년 학생의 촛불집회 명연설. 박 대통령보다 훨씬 낫네" (A Power Speech By a Primary-School Girl: Much Better Than Park).

31 "초등 4학년의 저희도 알 건 알아요" (Primary Students Know All That). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRgLUhfxHNg&t=12s>, accessed November 1, 2018.

32 "제주서 날아온 90살 할머니의 한마디." [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6\\_D-wWZQr8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6_D-wWZQr8), accessed November 1, 2018.

extraordinary desire to change the nation. A 70-year-old woman, meanwhile, said, “While watching the news about the influence-peddling, I was totally frustrated and had to come along. How is this possible?”<sup>33</sup> She regretted having no knowledge about politics, and criticized older Koreans who failed to understand what was at stake:

The older generations’ wrongdoings have put the young people and students in a struggle. On behalf of the older people, I’m sorry and offer my apologies. I reflect on my past, and the nation’s people should reassess what is wrong.<sup>34</sup>

Her statement helped create an emotional connection with protesters from across the diverse age groups involved in the events, and contributed to efforts by protesters to transform the nation. Meanwhile, a middle-aged man from Ansan City said, “I feel so betrayed and frustrated. Park’s two press conferences were full of lies, which is unforgivable.” All Koreans, young and old, should continue to protest until Park resigned, he claimed. Participating in the protests was a duty, responsibility, and right for all Koreans, which is akin to what Archer (1995) describes as the actions of a voluntary social actor. The speaker showed a picture of his 86-year-old mother holding a sign saying “Park Geun-Hye, Step Down!” and said that his mother was pleased that he was participating in the protests.<sup>35</sup>

Hearing speeches from such an array of Koreans enhanced the sense of camaraderie among the protesters, or a “deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 2006: 7) and a shared love for country and fellow citizens (Stacey 2018: 2). Their motivations for joining the protests were to condemn “Park and her aides” making a mockery of their own people” and “to restore justice in the nation.”<sup>36</sup> The protesters were aware of Park’s misconduct, such as

33 “[풀영상] (11.11) 박근혜 해야 촛불을 뜨겁게 만든 할머니의 입담” (Grandma’s Power Speech to Heat Up the Candle to Bring Down Park). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beNAhRhwsCE&t=15s>, accessed November 1, 2018.

34 “[풀영상] (11.11) 박근혜 해야 촛불을 뜨겁게 만든 할머니의 입담” (Grandma’s Power Speech to Heat Up the Candle to Bring Down Park).

35 A middle aged man. “광화문 최고 명연설-170만 군중의 폐부를 강타한 카리스마 광화문 촛불집회 안산시민자유발언” (A Charismatic *Candlelight* Campaign Speech to Hit the Hearts of 1.7 Million Protesters). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7b15dJgxmIQ>, accessed November 1, 2018.

36 *Maeil Sinmun*. 2016. “대구 여고생 정권퇴진 연설 영상, 인터넷.SNS통해 급속도로 퍼져” (A Daegu School Girl and Her Video Clip to Ask for Park’s Impeachment, A Fast Spread Through the Internet and SNS).



the failed response to the *Sewolho*-ferry sinking.<sup>37</sup> According to a university student speaking at the protests, Koreans generally believe two things about national politics: the state is not perfect but should continuously improve, and people should be able to trust their leaders. He argued that with these two beliefs being violated, and the incumbent political class unable to rectify these problems, protest and social change were the only recourses available to Koreans.<sup>38</sup>

The speeches at the protests illustrate how ordinary Koreans were transformed from *agents* to *actors* (Archer 2003: 121), and exercised what, in a different context, Barack Obama called “active citizenry” (Delury 2017: 100). Lee Jeong-A, for instance, said that before the protests, she was “ignorant, didn’t know the words like the ruling and opposition party, and the length of the presidency.” She joined a Women’s Association in Geoje District and played a small part in changing national affairs. Lee said: “Normally, I don’t want public attention; I’m shy and want to support the association ‘behind the scenes,’ but I’m standing in front of you now.”<sup>39</sup> Lee described her personal transformation into first an agent, and then a social actor and her part in the grassroots movement, as “miraculous,” or what Archer refers to as double morphogenesis. As illustrated earlier, some of the protesters in their 80s and 90s underwent similarly miraculous double morphogenesis out of their care for future generations. A senior high-schooler, meanwhile, wrote on Facebook that: “the nation won’t change overnight through the mass *Candlelight* demonstrations, but ... Let us all become a sovereign people who take action.”<sup>40</sup> She encouraged other Koreans to play their part, too.

## Concluding Remarks

This critical-realist analysis of speeches from the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution* revealed the prevalence of grassroots and calculated nationalism

37 *Maeil Sinmun*. 2016. “대구 여고생 정권퇴진 연설 영상, 인터넷·SNS통해 급속도로 퍼져” (A Daegu School Girl and Her Video Clip to Ask for Park’s Impeachment, A Fast Spread Through the Internet and SNS).

38 “국범근, 박근혜 퇴진촉구 집회연설 ‘분노하라’” (Guk Beom-Geun speech to impeach Park). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUB541ycR8c>, accessed November 1, 2018.

39 “부산 촛불집회 용감한 시민 할머니 외 3명 발언 모습 박근혜 그 XXXX, 발탁 서는 걸 좋아하는 우리나라 좋은나라 청와대 비아그라 풍자, 어둠은 빛을 이길 수 없다.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geF14W8Fxn8>, accessed November 1, 2018.

40 *Maeil Sinmun*. 2016. “대구 여고생 정권퇴진 연설 영상, 인터넷·SNS통해 급속도로 퍼져” (A Daegu School Girl and Her Video Clip to Ask for Park’s Impeachment, A Fast Spread Through the Internet and SNS).

in contemporary Korea. Speakers provided scathing critiques of corruption and the indifference of the ruling class towards the masses. In asking if they had a proper country, Koreans expressed a vote of no-confidence in their leaders and how the Korean society was kept under proper governance. The *Sewolho*-ferry sinking and allegations of influence-peddling by Choi Soon-Sil ignited public anger and resulted in nationwide protests. In some respects, such as their references to what speakers saw as the abiding significance of Confucian values, the speeches were consistent with the ethno-nationalism and patriotism that have long dominated Korea. But speakers also called for ethno-nationalism to be supplemented with a more “calculated” and liberal form of nationalism, in which citizenship is defined by more than blood ties. By way of illustration, the corpus contained only a single reference to the “nation” or “ethnic group” (민족), and twenty-one references to the “nation-state” (국가).

Two main findings flow from this analysis. First, grassroots nationalism needs to be understood in the context of South Korea’s “compressed modernity” (Chang 2010) and the remarkable transitions it has undergone in recent decades (Baker 2010). South Korea is a rare if not unique example of a society achieving substantive degrees of democratization and economic development at the same time. That is, the structure and culture have simultaneously transformed. In this process, what has been lagging is a fairer distribution of economic and life opportunities irrespective of authoritarian or democratic regimes. The unfair distribution of wealth has halted the improvement of ideas and culture. The agency that enabled Koreans to overcome authoritarianism and poverty has persisted in the democratic era in recent decades and contributed to grassroots activism, such as during the *Candlelight* protests. There was a robust liberal tinge to the *Candlelight* protests and to the prescriptions for socio-political reform revealed in the speeches, but we should not automatically assume that grassroots movements can only be put to progressive ends. The counter-protests in favour of Park by conservative activists (Han and Hundt 2021, see Ch.7) are a reminder of the widespread potential of grassroots nationalism in Korea and of the multiplicity of nationalist visions.

Second, this chapter has demonstrated the relationship between grassroots nationalism on the one hand and the related concepts of everyday nationalism, banal nationalism, and micro-nationalism on the other. In this regard, the choice of critical realism as part of the analytical framework in this chapter as well as throughout this book was both essential and deliberate: the analytical dualism of the model separates structure and culture from agency and vice versa for the sake of rigorous analysis, rather

than conflating these terms by any means of upward, downward, or central conflating. By maintaining this distinction while also being cognizant of the interplay between them, this chapter contributes to the development of grassroots nationalism as a descriptor of a particular form of organized and purposeful political activism.

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# 7 Nostalgic Nationalists in South Korea

## The Flag-Carriers' Struggles

### Abstract

*The Flag-Carriers' Struggle* is the counter-movement to the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution*. Flag-carriers found Park Geun-Hye's impeachment and Moon Jae-In's inauguration incomprehensible. They argued that Park was innocent, called for her release from prison, and claimed that Moon's election was illegitimate. An analysis of speeches made during conservative counter-protests between 2016 and 2019 illustrates that these activists rejected a new era in South Korean political and economic life. Their speeches conveyed a clear desire to have the legacy of the industrialization generation recognized in contemporary South Korea. These flag-carriers are evidence that a marginalized set of desires and aspirations about South Korean nationalism and identity coexist alongside the progressive views of the *Candlelight* protesters.

**Keywords:** Nostalgic nationalism, South Korea, flag-carriers, Park Geun-Hye impeachment, *Candlelight* protests

### Introduction

South Korea has undergone monumental political and economic changes in recent decades. It is a young democracy and its economy has advanced rapidly. Like other democratic societies, there is a broad spectrum of political parties. Political divisions between progressives and conservatives are evident as political realities, and each group sees the other as its main competitor for political power. In contemporary South Korean politics, however, these labels have developed particular connotations which do not align perfectly with traditional divisions in liberal democracies such as conservatives, liberals, progressives, and ethnonationalists. South Korean progressives are generally comparable to a mixture of their moderate centre-left and moderate right parties in the liberal-democratic world, albeit with



perhaps a stronger reformist bent; they tend to focus on enacting policy changes that will enhance the freedoms and rights of ordinary people, which are key agendas for libertarians in the West. South Korean conservatives, meanwhile, are comparable to a combination of neo-liberals and the more rigid doctrinaire conservative parties of the democratic world. Unlike their counterparts in other countries, however, South Korean conservatives are still motivated by objectives from the Cold War era, such as the promotion of capitalism and opposition to communism. These objectives also, therefore, affect how they view relations with North Korea: they equate inter-Korea dialogues with an attempt to communize the Korean peninsula. Whereas the Cold War and its associated ideological conflicts have become irrelevant in most democracies, these conflicts are still pertinent in South Korea.

Both progressive and conservative politicians have attempted to create visions of the Korean nation-state that reflect their worldviews, and one of the most potent expressions of nationalism from the conservative side of South Korean politics has been the “national flag-carriers’ troop” (태극기 부대). The “flaggers” were spurred into action by the campaign to impeach President Park Geun-Hye in late 2016, which has been termed the “*Candlelight Revolution*.” Park was accused of allowing her long-term confidante, Choi Soon-Sil, to exercise undue influence over national affairs. Progressive activists played a leading role in organizing the campaign against Park, but the belief that she had committed wrongdoings worthy of removal from office crossed traditional ideological divides. The campaign was supported by most segments of South Korean society, and accurately reflected national sentiment about Park’s fitness for office. A survey in December 2016, at the height of the campaign to remove Park, found that 81 per cent of South Koreans supported her impeachment and just 14 per cent opposed it.<sup>1</sup> In the face of this overwhelming sentiment that Park should resign, conservative flag-carriers claimed that she was innocent. They continued to protest even after the National Assembly voted to refer articles of impeachment to the Constitutional Court, and after the Court upheld one of those articles in March 2017. Park was later found guilty of

1 Gallup Korea. 2016. “데일리 오피니언 제239호 (2016년 12월 2주)—대통령 탄핵, 차기 정치 지도자 선호도” (Daily Opinion 2016 December 2nd Week: President Impeachment, Preferred Next President). <https://www.gallup.co.kr/gallupdb/reportContent.asp?seqNo=795>, accessed January 17, 2021. The flaggers also strongly opposed the prosecution of Yi Jae-Yong, CEO of the Samsung Corp., for bribing President Park, see *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2021. “박영수 특검팀 4년2개월 고난의 행군...개인적으로 안타깝다” (The Park Young-Su Team’s Concerted Investigation). January 18, 2021, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/979256.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/979256.html), accessed January 18, 2021.

bribery and abuse of power. Following this guilty verdict, the flag-carriers called for Park's impeachment to be voided and for her release from jail. They also claimed that the election of Moon Jae-In, Park's successor, was illegitimate.

However, the emergence of the flag-carriers represents something more than the espousal of a certain view about the impeachment. These activists attribute South Korea's economic development almost exclusively to the leadership of Park Chung-Hee, a conservative icon (and Park Geun-Hye's father), who ruled South Korea from 1961 to 1979. Like their progressive counterparts and the *Candlelight* protesters, the flag-carriers are nationalists who care deeply about South Korea. They have a clear vision about the direction in which they believe South Korean society should move. In this chapter I use a critical-realist perspective to examine the socio-economic and cultural conditions that produced the flag-carriers and their movement, as well as the impact that they have had on South Korean society. The chapter illustrates how the flag-carriers' worldview is internally coherent, in that it accurately reflects values shared by its members, but that it has limited external resonance, insofar as it is out of step with the political views of the majority of South Koreans. In this sense, there is an anti-system (Capoccia 2002; Zulianello 2018) element to the flag-carriers' movement, insofar as they are unable to accept the legitimacy of their political opponents, and they thus pose a threat to the future of liberal democracy in South Korea.

Conventional studies of nationalism tend to prioritize its top-down variety, whereby political leaders "create a discourse with which people of different minds, differently located in a society, can feel comfortable" (Cohen 1996: 810). Political leaders often claim to know what their constituents think and want, but nationalism imposed from above fails "to recognize the role of the ordinary person in taking the grand images presented by the leadership and recasting them in the more familiar terms of local experience" (Herzfeld 1992: 49, cited in Cohen 1996: 811).

Grassroots nationalism, meanwhile, can also have a lasting influence. Leaders need to listen to grassroots concerns, which are integral to an advanced democracy (Dobson 2014). If "the nation" is to remain a coherent and meaningful political unit, political leaders need to know what is on the minds of citizens. There is a rich tradition of grassroots nationalism in South Korea, drawn from "bottom-up discourses on nationalism re-shaping national imaginations among people, bringing the nation closer to the everyday experience of the general public" (Ma 2007: 149). Shared experiences of the threat of North Korean aggression, the corresponding need for Korean reunification, and state-cultivated as well as grassroots-based anti-Japanese

sentiments have to varying degrees been politically exploited in South Korea. Before the country became a democracy, military and authoritarian regimes coerced ordinary people to cooperate with top-down nationalistic governance, and most South Koreans acquiesced to this demand. However, ordinary people have been more willing to express their own version of nationalism since the transition to democracy in the 1980s.

### **The Rise of the *Flag-Carriers' Movement***

Since 2016, the flag-carriers have been the most persistent organizers of large-scale political events in South Korea (Yi 2017: 39; Chae 2018: 108). Initially, participants tended to be aged sixty and older, but over time these events began to include a visible representation of other demographic groups, including high school and university students, young mothers, conservative academics, journalists, and Christians (Kim 2017b: 9). The flaggers venerate the political and economic trajectories set by the Park Chung-Hee regime (1961–1979), and are philosophically committed to those trajectories (Kang 2019).

These conservative activists value the politics and culture of the past, when the industrialization generation were the primary agents of South Korean society during its rapid development in the 1970s and 1980s (Chae 2018). They depict these decades, during which President Park and his conservative successors engineered a seemingly miraculous economic recovery and development, and helped the country to recover from the devastation of the Korean War in the 1950s, as a glorious era in South Korean history. Park, and the people who worked so hard during this era, are thus the heroes of the flag-carriers' "imagined community" (Anderson 2006). They cherish the values of that generation, such as an emphasis on national security and economic development, and believe that the industrialization generation has been wrongly displaced from the centre of national life due to the rapid political and cultural changes that began in the 1990s, following the 1988 Seoul Olympics. The flag-carriers, whether young or old, prefer the Park-era political and economic systems to contemporary South Korea, and think that society is on the wrong path (Lammers and Baldwin 2018).

The flag-carriers express their view of the industrialization era through what they do and say in their campaigns, but they are selective in how they remember and depict that era. In addition to the South Korean flag, flag-carriers display American, Israeli, and occasionally Japanese flags, as well as the logo of the Samsung Corporation. They also display symbols

that represent government organizations, former soldiers, conservative Christians, anti-communism, and some dress in military uniforms (Yi 2017: 46–47). In other words, the flag-carriers celebrate the role of conservative organizations and governments, in partnership with anti-communist allies such as the U.S. and Japan, in fostering rapid economic development during a vital and consequential era in South Korean history. This type of depiction of modern South Korean history, however, downplays or ignores what progressives see as the many negative aspects of the industrialization era, such as the denial of democracy and human rights, as well as the environmental degradation that accompanied rapid economic development. As scholars such as Martin Heisler have noted, it is common for nationalists to present distorted or incomplete versions of history that neglect inconvenient truths and emphasize the supposedly glorious aspects of the past (Heisler 2008a, 2008b).

South Korea's flag-carriers appear to be prone to this type of partial reading of recent history, and this has put them in an antagonistic relationship with their progressive opponents, whose memories and understanding of the industrialization era are very different. These conservative activists have criticized the socio-political directions set by progressive administrations, starting with Kim Dae-Jung (1998–2003) and Roh Moo-Hyun (2003–2008). They oppose the shift away from authoritarian politics and the Sunshine Policy towards North Korea, in particular. In the eyes of conservatives, progressive administrations are intent on undoing the achievements of the Park Chung-Hee era and the industrialization generation who grew up during that time (Chang 2018b, 2018c; Eom 2004; Lee 2005). In placing themselves in such an antagonistic relationship with progressive politicians, however, the flag-carriers have also isolated themselves from a significant portion of other South Koreans (Cheon 2017; Kim and Heo 2018; cited in Chang 2018b: 358; see also Honneth 1995).

Prior studies of the flaggers have focused on personal motivations for participating in protests. Kim and Heo, for instance, argue that the protests are an attempt by older South Koreans to protect their standing in society, in response to younger people who have suffered from a lack of socio-economic opportunities (known as the "*Hell Chosun syndrome*")—(Kim and Heo 2018). However, arguments based solely on the assumption of inter-generational conflict ignore the fact that flaggers enjoy a reasonable degree of support among younger South Koreans. Surprisingly, those younger Koreans embraced some outdated ideas that resonate with the older generation. Kim Hak-Ryang has highlighted flaggers' support for Park Geun-Hye. Rather than factors such as place of origin, gender, income, or education, Kim argues

that the main motivation for participating in these protests is opposition to Park's impeachment (Kim 2019).

The flag-carriers' campaign is often depicted as a counter-movement to the progressive *Candlelight* protests (see, for example, Chae 2018: 109). But these studies do not explore what the flag-carriers actually think and say about Park's impeachment and its consequences, and how their vision of South Korea's future differs from that of progressives. Prior studies demonstrate that the flag-carriers are purposeful agents, but overlook the fact that their protests amount to more than merely the actions of a small number of disgruntled individuals. The flag-carriers are conscious political agents who are linked to prevailing structural and cultural contexts, which enable them to potentially enact political change in South Korea, or alternatively to preserve the status quo (cf., Ma 2007: 149).

Kim Wang-Bae notes that flag-carriers promote a free South Korea as an imagined community that needs to be protected at any cost (Kim 2017b: 33). Flag-carriers see the ideological division between conservatives and progressives since 2017 as akin to a gentle or quasi-civil war. The flag-carriers also exhibit traits of "anti-system" political parties and movements (Mitra 2016). That is, they have rejected the logic of political moderation, whereby political parties and actors appeal to the "median voter" by abandoning or compromising on their most extreme policies and beliefs (Downs 1957). This "moderation thesis" holds that rational political actors, especially those who aspire to govern in democratic societies, adopt policy platforms that align with the beliefs and preferences of identifiable groups of voters (Adams, Merrill, and Grofman 2005). Evidence of such moderation has been found in situations in which niche or new parties adjust their policies to compete with established ones in seventeen Western European countries,<sup>2</sup> the abandonment of radical proposals by former militants and their transformation into regular political parties in Latin America (Sprenkels 2019), and the partial integration of Islamic parties into conventional politics in Egypt, Iran, and Turkey (Tezcür 2010; Wickham 2004).

Anti-system parties and groups, however, may be ambivalent in their moderation and retain their core beliefs (Mitra 2013, 2016). In doing so, they may not accept the legitimacy of the extant democratic political system and the actors within it. That is, while moderates focus on "politics within the system," anti-system political actors concentrate on the "politics of the system" (Mitra 2016: 93). The anti-system descriptor fits South Korea's

2 Most of these countries are members of the European Union, although the sample also includes Norway and Switzerland; see Meguid (2005).

flag-carriers. What distinguishes the flag-carriers from other anti-system parties and movements, however, is that they are not a new political force but an integral part of the existing body politic. They represent a subset of South Korean conservative politics that has recently held power, but feared that it was losing influence and relevance.<sup>3</sup>

Political groups logically hold their own partisan worldview and ideology, which are of universal validity in the given time and context. Theories of inter-group dynamics (Festinger 1957; cited in Chang 2018a: 91), or group think (see Janis 1982), offer insights into how the flag-carriers promote such a partisan worldview and ideology, which may have limited universal validity. Cass Sunstein argues that group polarization can result when members of a group access sources of information that strengthens their beliefs, and then share this information and support each other, which reconfirms those beliefs (Sunstein 2003, 2009; cited in Chang 2018a: 91). The flag-carriers' selective exposure to news strengthens their unity, and their ideological beliefs have been well researched theoretically, as noted above. These studies have the advantage of considering grassroots perspectives and provide rich data from the bottom-up, but they do not place the flag-carriers in their proper structural and cultural context to the benefit of a rigorous analysis.

### **A Critical-Realist Analysis of the Flag-Carriers' Nationalism**

The flag-carriers' protests have been primarily an effort to oppose Park's impeachment, but they should also be understood as a campaign to oppose social change in South Korea, including in the structures and culture that shape the potential for such change. Margaret Archer's critical-realist approach to social movements shows how the interaction between structures, culture, and agency can reproduce or transform a society. For Archer, the structures of a society are the result of (un)equal relationships, which become engrained in society. Structures produce cultures and ideas, which can reinforce or dismantle those structures. Culture and ideas, in turn, can (im)mobilize agents to call for and effect social change, which can then bring about new structures or reproduce existing structures (Archer 1995, 1996).

3 Under complex socio-economic context, especially the sky-rocketting cost of housing in the capital areas like Seoul and Gyeonggi-do Province, the conservatives have regained power on the presidential election on the March 9, 2022 election, which threw out the progressive government after its one five-year term.

A critical-realist approach assumes that people have material interests and idealistic beliefs through which they express their concerns and translate these into action (Porpora 2013: 28). When people work together, they can reproduce or change the structures and culture of a society. Given its ability to explain the interaction between structure, culture, and agency, Archer's understanding of social movements is useful for analysing the grassroots nationalism of South Korea's flag-carriers.

## Methods

In what follows, I analyse flag-carriers' ideas, opinions, and viewpoints, as expressed in public speeches at rallies between 2016 and 2019. I selected speeches based on relevance, and the resultant corpus consisted of twenty-seven YouTube clips containing thirty-nine speakers' statements (Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1 Flag-Carrying Speakers' Age and Gender Distribution**

Age group	Middle & High school	University or 20s	30s to 50s	60s +	Total
Male	2	5	8	4	19
Female	3	7	8	2	20
Total	5	12	16	6	39

**Note:** Based on the information provided by speakers and visual assessments

South Korean media reports generally provide the names and ages of people who appear in the audio-visual recordings. It is also common for speakers to reveal their ages and professions during their speeches. I have watched all the video clips several times each and reviewed the transcripts. In doing so, I compiled a record of all the speakers' genders, reported ages, and occupations. I then checked these records against the videos for accuracy.

The most important criteria for inclusion in the corpus were that a speech took place at the flag-carriers' rallies, and that the speeches were then shared publicly and widely. The data contained in the speeches is publicly available and voluntarily provided by its creators in a non-exclusive manner.

Using YouTube clips as a data source helps us overcome rank-and-file activists' reluctance to talk to researchers about their views, and enables us to understand political movements "in the streets" (Gattinara and Pirro 2019). In keeping with a grounded theory approach to qualitative research, this type

of data has the ability to reveal what activists consider important (Creswell and Poth 2017) without researchers' intervention and contamination of data. Data derived from interviews, by contrast, risks revealing mainly the issues that are of greatest interest to researchers.

In a high-choice media environment such as South Korea, there is a commensurately high level of selective exposure and bias mobilization, including for citizens who become involved in political movements (Hameleers and Van der Meer 2019; Chang 2018a). Compared to people in other countries, South Koreans tend to have a low level of trust in the media: a cross-national survey conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in 2020 found that “only twenty-one percent of [South] Koreans trust the news,” which was “the lowest among the forty surveyed countries for four years in a row.”<sup>4</sup> Like other South Koreans, the flag-carriers draw on the mainstream news as a source of political information, but their primary source of information is conservatively oriented social media, especially YouTube. They also use KaKaoTalk and YouTube to promote their campaigns. For this reason, I supplement the above-mentioned data sources with media reports and opinions expressed through social-media sites such as KaKaoTalk, Band, blogs, and internet cafés.

### **Contesting the Legitimacy of the Impeachment, Progressives, and the Media**

Even during a period of heightened political polarization, the flag-carriers were isolated during the impeachment crisis and its aftermath. South Korean media outlets have a relatively high level of political parallelism in regard to whether they support conservative or progressive parties. It is relatively rare for conservative mainstream media outlets to oppose measures taken by conservative administrations, and yet this was precisely what occurred during Park Geun-Hye's impeachment. All mainstream media found that Park's administration was involved in influence peddling, and even bastions of the conservative media were either critical of Park's involvement or supported her impeachment.<sup>5</sup>

4 TK 2020. Amid this general lack of trust in the media, a separate survey found that South Koreans tended to rate less-conservative outlets—namely *KBS*, *MBC* and *JTBC*—the highest, although the conservative *TV Chosun* was ranked fourth.

5 See e.g., *Joongang Ilbo*. 2017. “사설: 박근혜의 불복 ... 나라 두 동강 내려는가” (Editorial: Park Geun-Hye Rejects the Court Decision ... Attempting to Split the Nation?). March 12, accessed January 21, 2021: <https://news.joins.com/article/21362870>; *Donga Ilbo*. 2017. “사설: 박



The flag-carriers, however, had enormous difficulty coping with the impeachment of President Park. They argued that the process by which Park was removed was illegitimate and they could not accept the legitimacy of Park's successor, Moon Jae-In. A high school student carrying the South Korean flag, one male speaker contended that "the candlelight-holders' madness has had its way and President Park has been dismissed. I can't believe and I don't understand it."<sup>6</sup> The flag-carriers had support from some conservative politicians. More than two years after Park had been impeached, for instance, Cho Won-Jin, a member of the conservative Our Republican Party (우리공화당), claimed:

Park didn't take any bribes and had nothing to do with any criminal accusation. The Republic of Korea is now stripped of democracy and keeps Park in prison. The left-wingers have ruined the nation. The left and dictatorial politics ignited the *Candlelight coup d'état* and snatched Park's power.<sup>7</sup>

The impeachment was not only a disaster for the flag-carriers because it resulted in the removal from power of their preferred leader; it was also catastrophic because it enabled their arch-nemesis, Moon Jae-In, to assume power. The flag-carriers saw themselves as representatives of the only legitimate political force in South Korea, and thus cast their progressive opponents, chiefly Moon's Democratic Party, as illegitimate. They accused Moon of being an agent of North Korea and promoted the view that North Korean agents had initiated the impeachment process, which they claimed was an act of treason:

Let us be aware Liberty Korea Party and the Democratic Party of Korea are the culprits to have caused the appalling status of present South Korea.

대통령, 대한민국을 위해 고민할 때다" (Editorial: President Park, Time to Think about the Nation). January 18, accessed January 21, 2021: <https://www.donga.com/news/Politics/article/all/20170217/82923763/1>; *Chosun Ilbo*. 2016. "조선일보에 불만 있다. 나라의 내일 걱정하는 정통 보수 언론의 길 되찾아야" (Frustrated with the *Chosun Ilbo*: We Must Return as an Orthodox Conservative Media). December 28, accessed January 21, 2021: [https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2016/12/27/2016122702925.html](https://www.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/12/27/2016122702925.html).

6 Speaker A. 2016. "대한문 태극기집회중 고등학생 감동의 명연설" (Great Speech by a High-School Student at the Daehanmun Gate). December 31, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYo5uegt9VE&t=1s>.

7 W. Cho 2019. "문재인퇴진 태극기집회/대한애국당 조원진당대표의 사자후" (Taeguikki Rallies to Bring Down Moon Jae-in/ Representative of Our Republican Party). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4M3LfZ7qfc>, accessed May 15, 2019.

North Korean collaborators taking direct order from the North have led to Park's impeachment, which was clearly treason by the opportunists.<sup>8</sup>

The flaggers' mindset seemed to remain in the Cold War and unwilling to dialogue with the North Korean regime. It was no coincidence that the flag-carriers brought what is ostensibly a foreign policy matter—relations with North Korea—into their campaign to have Park restored to the presidency, which falls squarely in the realm of domestic politics. Most South Koreans of all political persuasions share a strong desire for reunification with North Korea, although they differ in their views of how to achieve it (cf., Kim 2017a). So it is quite common for political activists, including the flag-carriers, to see inter-Korean relations as an extension of domestic politics. The Kim Dae-Jung (1998–2003) and Roh Moo-Hyun (2003–2008) governments, Moon's progressive predecessors, had promoted dialogue with the North through the Sunshine Policy. Conservatives, such as the flag-carriers, had welcomed the return of a right-leaning government in 2008, and Park's shortened tenure was thus a significant blow to these activists (cf., Chung 2003). The flag-carriers embraced Park's hard-line policies, such as her decision to close the Kaesong Industrial Complex in response to North Korea's nuclear-weapons tests, her calls for Kim Jong-Un to be removed from power, and for the North Korean people to be liberated (Ihm and Yi 2017).<sup>9</sup> According to a theology student who spoke at a flag-carrier rally, "Kim Jong-Un should be removed, and we need to liberate thirty million fellow North Koreans."<sup>10</sup>

The flag-carriers contend that the installation of Moon Jae-In in 2017 was tantamount to South Korea being taken over by the North. According to a flag-carrier in his twenties, South Korea is vulnerable to the North's propaganda. Pro-North Korean "commies," he claimed, had penetrated every corner of South Korean society, such as the teachers' union, and teachers were educating students with new ideas that contradicted what Park Chung-Hee

8 Heo in Yi, Gyu-Taek, Heo Pyeong-Hwan and Lee Gyu-Rhee. 2019. "놀랍다 통영태극기집회 이규택 허평환 이규리연설" (Amazing, Tongyeong National Flag Meeting—Speeches by Yi Gyu-Taek, Hur Pyeong-Hwan, Lee Gyu-Rhee). March 16, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGVLunZxDdA>. The Liberty Korea Party is now known as the People Power Party (국민의 힘).

9 *Hanguk Kyeongje* 2016. "개성공단 폐쇄, 북한이 핵실험 등으로 파국 자초" (Closing Kaesong Industrial Park, North Korea's Self Inflicting due to Nuclear Tests). February 12, accessed March 11, 2020: <https://www.hankyung.com/news/article/2016021233941>.

10 Speaker B. 2018. "신학대학생 연설 풀·영상·문재인대통령 감도 안되는게~문재인퇴진 범국민대회 태극기집회" (A Theological Student's Speech: Moon Jae-In is Not a Worthy President, National Movement to Bring Down Moon). March 28, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4710JCle7aw>.

told South Koreans decades earlier.<sup>11</sup> The flaggers vociferously oppose the use of state power to progressive ends. For example, after Yi Nak-Yeon, Moon Jae-In government's prime minister, requested that government bureaucrats honour the *Candlelight* protesters' expectations by addressing corruption and implementing reform, Choi Ye-Jin, a flag-carrier in her twenties, argued that "bureaucrats can't be the tools to honour the goals of the *Candlelight Revolution*" and noted that "the Chinese government welcomed Choo Mi-Ae, the leader of South Korea's Ruling Party (i.e., Democratic Party of Korea), as an honourable guest to the National Congress of the Communist Party of China" in October 2017.<sup>12</sup>

A homemaker who gave a speech at a flag-carrier rally in February 2017 claimed that "eradicating the commies is the biggest challenge for South Korea,"<sup>13</sup> while a speaker at a rally held in Tongyeong City in March 2017 complained that he could not sleep for fear that Kim Jong-Un might seize and communize the South.<sup>14</sup> Kim Do-Eun, a theology student, meanwhile, cited Han Sung-Joo, a former general in the South Korean Air Force, to argue that the inter-Korea dialogue needed to stop and the flag-carriers needed to seize the moment to fight back, and rescue South Korea.<sup>15</sup> Ihm Jong-Seok, President Moon's chief of staff, was accused by flag-carriers of being a North Korean agent, and of taking direct orders from the North with the goal of "dissolving the South into the communist North."<sup>16</sup> Kim Do-Eun, a twenty-three-year-old flag-carrier, claimed that conservatives had prevented a communist takeover: "Moon Jae-In is conscious of the flag-carriers' protest and thus slowing down his interactions with the North. Without our protests, Moon Jae-In and Kim Jong-Un must have held hands together and South Korea must have been communized already."<sup>17</sup>

11 Speaker C. 2017. "8차 탄핵반대 태극기집회, 애국청년모임 발언" (The 8th National Flag Meeting against Impeachment, Speech by a Patriotic Youth). January 7, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xX9gtL5W7q8&t=4s>.

12 Choi Ye-Jin 2019. "대전 태극기집회, 최예진청년의 조용하면서도 멋진연설" (Flag-Carriers' Protests in Daejeon, Choi Ye-Jin's Calm and Wonderful Speech). December 2, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3Aon6dKics>.

13 Lee, Su-Mi. 2017. "이수미주부, 태극기집회의 통쾌한 연설, 2월25일 서울역 탄핵반대집회" (Lee Soo-Mi, A Refreshing Speech, Seoul Meeting against Impeachment). February 25, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfANUcoWvXI>.

14 Heo in Yi, Heo and Lee 2019.

15 Speaker B. 2018.

16 Speaker B. 2018.

17 Kim Do-Eun 2018. "23세 청년 김도은대학생 '폭풍연설' 대한문 태극기 혁명 국민운동본부" (23-year-old Kim Do-Eun University Student's Amazing Speech, Daehanmun Gate National Flag Revolution Council). July 29, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oc9QmXqoPgg>.

The flag-carriers interpreted even benign policy choices as somehow serving the interests of North Korea. For instance, they accused Moon of following the North's *Juche* (self-reliance) ideology and using his overseas travels to further the North's interests.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, while the intention of Moon's plan to decommission nuclear power plants was to address environmental concerns, the flag-carriers saw it as a way for "the commies" to destroy South Korean society. According to Kim Do-Eun, a twenty-three-year-old university student, "We must oppose the denuclearization of the power plants. The denuclearization is a strategy to hand over the South to the North."<sup>19</sup> Some flag-carriers interpreted Moon's claim that South Korea needed to increase government expenditures on social welfare for the disadvantaged as a socialist policy. According to Chae Ji-Min, a twenty-seven-year-old female speaker at one of the rallies,

Young people in their twenties and thirties chose the left-wing party. Why? It was for the sake of standing against the corrupt conservative party. Those young voters were attracted to a left-wing party but will be trashed after their use-by date. The left-wing in power has been found to be North Korean collaborators, using up the national funds in the name of welfare for the people.<sup>20</sup>

The flag-carriers' refusal to accept the legitimacy of Park's impeachment or Moon's government illustrates the anti-system tendency of the movement: that is, the flag-carriers refuse to accept that the democratic polity had produced an outcome—the removal of their preferred leader, and her replacement with a vilified opponent—that was not to their liking. These anti-system tendencies can be contrasted with the behaviour of progressives in South Korea, who held numerous rallies to oppose measures taken by the conservative Lee Myung-Bak (2008–2013) and Park Geun-Hye (2013–2017) administrations. Progressives mainly contested specific policy choices (e.g., the unwillingness of the Lee administration to enact measures to protect South Koreans from allegedly tainted beef imports) and the performance of the government (e.g., Park's aforementioned botching of the rescue of

18 Yi Jae-Ho. 2019. "(리얼)전라도 성지라 불리는 광주 금남로에서 최초로 문재인 깐 그남자!! (이재호)" (The Man Who Accused Moon Jae-In from Kwangju Keumnamro). January 19, accessed May 15, 2019; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeAkrzjBxoA>.

19 Kim D.-E. 2018.

20 Chae Ji-Min. 2017. "청와대 태극기 집회, 채지민 청년부대변인 사이다 연설" (Flag-Carriers' Rally, Speech by Chae Ji-Min, Deputy Spokesperson for Youth). September 2, accessed May 15, 2019; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsotcaXjUhM>.

children from the *Sewolho* in 2014), which are matters that can be debated and resolved within the political system. They did not, however, question the elections that brought conservative leaders to power, or their right to rule.

Illustrative of the anti-system tendencies of the flag-carriers was their disproportionate reliance on non-mainstream media.<sup>21</sup> If we presume that a free press that reports on “the facts” (such as the Park administration’s poor handling of the *Sewolho* rescue) is a vital element of a democratic society, we can understand why these activists are hostile to mainstream media outlets in South Korea and instead rely on alternative sources. The flag-carriers dismiss what the non-conservative segments of the mainstream media present and have created their own news which circulates on social media platforms such as YouTube and KaKaoTalk. A male speaker at the rallies, who reported that he was still in high school, gave voice to this scepticism about the mainstream media when he said that he “just can’t understand why the media cooperates with the [Moon] government’s running the nation. ... People are willing to believe Park received millions in bribes because there is supportive audio-visual evidence and recordings.”<sup>22</sup>

According to Lee Gun-Ro, a member of the Council for the National Movement to Vindicate Park Geun-Hye, “South Koreans are floating on a chaotic sea of manipulation under the control of traitors. Do you still believe TV news? Fellow South Koreans are misled. There’re full of lies and the nation is ridiculed.”<sup>23</sup> Han Geun-Hyung, who told the audience during his speech that he was a postgraduate student, found it particularly problematic that young people uncritically accept the news that they read on South Korean internet portals such as Naver and Daum.<sup>24</sup> Another flag-carrier insisted that with the distorted media and the influence of communized unions,

21 The same may apply to the progressive counterparts as the Korean mainstream media is not well trusted. Whether there is a matter of degree between the conservatives and progressives is open to debate.

22 Speaker A. 2016. Under the Moon Jae-In government (2017–2022), the progressive citizens had little trust in the conservative media outlets, such as *Chosun Ilbo*, *Joongang Ilbo*, and *Dong-A Ilbo*. The conservative citizens considered them to be in close cooperation with the nation’s vested interest groups, such as the “haves,” and those prosecutors who were politically leaning rather than neutral.

23 Lee Gun-Ro. 2018. “뉴스타운TV: 청년대표 이군로 학생 애국 연설, 대한문 제13차 탄핵 기각 총궐기 국민대회 태극기집회” (Youth Leader, Lee Gun-Ro Speech, Flag-Carriers’ 13th Demonstration against Park’s Impeachment). March 28, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4710JClE7aw>.

24 Han Geun-Hyung. 2017. “청주집회, 부산대학원생 ‘한근형 애국청년’ 연설 이야기” (A Patriotic Speech at Cheongju). February 26, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yU-cqpvDXc>.

the South Korean economy was collapsing, its industrial sector was being destroyed, and small businesses were going bankrupt. The root of these problems, he claimed, was Moon Jae-In, whom the speaker accused of being a spy for North Korea.<sup>25</sup>

The flag-carriers' speeches thus revealed more than just a deep-seated dissatisfaction with South Korean society following the impeachment of Park Geun-Hye: they did not accept the legitimacy of a political system that was not dominated by the flag-carriers' preferred leaders. As the next section shows, the flag-carriers also attempted to influence the culture—that is, ideas and beliefs—that informed South Koreans in their everyday lives.

### Nostalgia, Belief in Fake News, and Irrationality

Cultures consist of a set of commonly agreed norms, which lie in “the realm of intersubjectivity, ideas and ideational influences” (Archer 1996: xiii; cited in de Souza 2014: 146). In South Korea, the ideas that inform the flag-carriers and impel them to oppose the contemporary socio-political transformations occurring in South Korea are unlike those traditionally espoused by conservatives. The flag-carriers are nostalgic for the past and have unconditional respect for former conservative leaders, even though some of these activists were too young to directly experience and remember the industrialization era. Younger flag-carriers who were not even born when Park Chung-Hee was assassinated in 1979 praise the generation which they believe lived through a glorious and important time in South Korean history. For instance, a flag-carrier in his thirties recalled seeing older people in their eighties at Seoul Railway Station in 2016 who were weeping, waving national flags, and passionate about saving the nation.<sup>26</sup> A speaker in her twenties said:

We're proud of the older generation's sweat and tears, and their achievement to make South Korea the tenth strongest economy. We're not hungry and anyone can be successful if prepared to work hard. We young people

25 Nam Kwang-Gyu. 2019. “4월3일은 희망의시작| 남광규 매봉통일연구소장 | 114차 창원 태극기집회” (Nam Kwang-Gyu's Speech at Changwon Meeting). March 16, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twlrSSaNtTs>.

26 Yeo Myung. 2017. “(뉴스타운TV) 30대 직장인 대표 여명 애국연설, 대한문 제16차 탄기국 태극기집회” (A Patriotic Speech at Daehanmun Meeting). March 4, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gtOntvB6Gg>.

live gratefully and are unlike the lefty youth, seeing the world with negative eyes.<sup>27</sup>

Lee Gun-Ro, who described himself as a conservative youth leader in his twenties during a speech at a flag-carrier rally, maintained that it was important to remember the toils of the industrialization generation, who “struggled with hunger, risking their lives and working for the nation’s modernization. They’re the nation’s heroes.”<sup>28</sup> Most South Koreans would generally agree with this sentiment, but a distinguishing feature of the flag-carriers is that they equate the sacrifices of the industrialization generation with conservative leaders such as Park Geun-Hye. The industrialization generation and their young supporters believe that South Korea’s strong economy was solely or predominantly an achievement that can be attributed to Park Chung-Hee and other conservative leaders, and that the Moon Jae-In administration was risking the strength of South Korea’s strong economy by seeking the reunification of Korea under communism. A younger female speaker at a flag-carrier rally, for instance, asserted:

President Park, this is a difficult time for you! You’ve stated you’re married to the Republic of Korea. President Park Chung-Hee saved the nation from poverty and built a proud South Korea. We know you’re the daughter of President Park and the First Lady and we know your love for the nation. We’re proud of you, constantly trying to strengthen the nation that rewards individuals’ hard work.<sup>29</sup>

Given the respect with which the flag-carriers hold the Park family, it is inconceivable for them that Park Geun-Hye could have been impeached. Most South Koreans, in the view of the flag-carriers, are blind to the fact that Park was innocent. Kim In-Soon, a woman in her forties, for instance, declared:

This holy ground and conservative city of Daegu produced four presidents of South Korea. But we couldn’t protect Park Geun-Hye. President Park Chung-Hee was worried about the nation at the risk of being communized. He built this nation of liberty, peace and a strong economy. However, the

27 Speaker C. 2017.

28 Lee G.-R. 2018.

29 Speaker C. 2017.

young people around us go past us, blocking their ears. They don't know the truth. How sad!<sup>30</sup>

The speed and extent of South Korea's rare accomplishment of democracy and economic development in recent years can be difficult for some South Koreans to comprehend, but the flag-carriers are particularly committed to conservative values and reluctant to consider the implications of these changes. A coping mechanism for flag-carriers has thus been the consumption and reproduction of fake news about the current state of South Korean politics. In their speeches, they create pretexts for opposing Moon Jae-In, their ideological nemesis, even if doing so means placing much greater trust in foreign powers such as the United States and Japan than in their own government. According to Han Geun-Hyung, a speaker who described himself as a postgraduate student:

American aircraft-carriers have come to the Korean peninsula because war is about to break out. Do you know what the Japanese media said? South Korea is under seizure by the communists, who will impeach President Park and proclaim their legitimacy. This is why James Mattis, the American defense secretary, visited South Korea [in February 2017] to put pressure on the Constitutional Court not to dismiss President Park.<sup>31</sup>

By contesting the impeachment process that consequently brought him to power, the flag-carriers have attempted to deny Moon Jae-In a legitimate place within South Korea's body politic, which they define in terms of freedom. For the flag-carriers, freedom connotes a political system that subscribes to conservative values and opposes communism. One implication is that they expect a hard-line approach towards communist states, namely China and North Korea. Despite being predominantly sparked by the impeachment crisis that took place wholly within South Korea, therefore, a significant portion of the flag-carriers' campaign revolves around denying the legitimacy of North Korea's right to exist. These activists see Moon Jae-In's attempts at dialogue with North Korea as a threat to a free South Korea, and claim that North Korea is not a legitimate interlocutor for peace

30 Kim In-Soon. 2018. "대구태극기집회: 대구 김인순여사의 연설—대구 동화백화점앞" (Kim In-Soon's Speech at Daegu Donghwa Department Store Meeting). December 23, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQMk8myni3Y>.

31 Han G.-H. 2017.



talks (see Yang 2020). They were concerned, therefore, about the summits between Kim Jong-Un of North Korea and Donald Trump of the United States in 2018 and 2019. Cho Won-Jin, the Leader of Our Republican Party, for instance, noted that the party's first goal was to protect a free South Korea. Getting Park and other right-wing leaders released from prison, Cho claimed, was necessary to preserve South Korea's freedom and legal system. Another goal was to eradicate the Kim Jong-Un regime and take over the North under the banner of freedom, and to enable eighty million Koreans to enjoy a happy life in a reunified country.<sup>32</sup> The flag-carriers' definition of freedom therefore sets them on an inevitable collision course with democratically elected administrations in South Korea—such as Moon's—who seek to facilitate better relations with the Kim regime in North Korea.<sup>33</sup>

Another source that informs the words and actions of the flag-carriers is Christian leaders, especially Reverend Chun Kwang-Hoon, the President of the Christian Council of South Korea. Chun's organization represents about 3 per cent of Christians in South Korea, and he has been in the forefront of right-wing demonstrations against the Moon government. A theology student, for instance, started a speech by referring to former President Rhee Syngman's (1875–1965) last prayer for, and blessing on, the nation. The student labelled progressive religious leaders “pro-North Korea commies” and asserted that Christian ministers who did not denounce Moon's reunification policy were cowardly scoundrels.<sup>34</sup> He said that these ministers would be judged by God, and prayed for the Kim regime's collapse, the liberation of his fellow Koreans in the North, and the eradication of those who attempted to destroy South Korea.

The nationalism promoted by the flag-carriers has a strong partisan tinge. It presents the legitimate scope of political ideas in narrow terms, and thereby creates an antagonistic and adversarial dynamic with other political groups. This necessarily reduces the potential for flag-carriers to be effective political agents, as I discuss below.

32 Heo in Yi, Heo and Lee 2019; see also S.-J. Kim (2017).

33 The flag-carriers—along with most other conservative politicians, media and YouTubers in South Korea—greatly trust and cite conservative Korean-American groups and Korea-watchers in the United States as authoritative, reliable and pertinent sources. Those who enjoy their support include Joshua Stanton and Gordon Chang (see Yi 2020), both of whom have advocated a hard-line approach towards North Korea and have been critical of the Moon government's engagement policy.

34 Speaker B. 2018.

## Campaign to Free Park Geun-Hye and Spread Fake News

The stated goals of the flag-carriers include protecting democracy, punishing “turncoats and traitors,” and having Park Geun-Hye released from prison.<sup>35</sup> A common thread to these goals, however, is the desire to simply “stay-put” or seek morphostasis (cf., Archer 2007), which is unlikely to be achieved. The flag-carriers reserve the right for conservative governments to implement policies that they deem to be legitimate, but deny their progressive counterparts the same right. They see themselves as the sole legitimate repository of South Korean patriotism. As noted in the previous section, the flag-carriers’ progressive opponents also contest key aspects of the policies espoused and implemented by conservatives, but they do not question the patriotism and legitimacy of conservatism per se. The flag-carriers, however, drew a sharp distinction between themselves and their opponents. A high-school student, for instance, told his audience at a flag-carrier rally:

When singing the national anthem and waving the flag, I feel responsible for protecting the nation. My mother’s brother-in-law fought and died in the Vietnam War. Despite his sacrifice, there was no compensation. Those who are protecting the nation should be rewarded. Candlelight holders are attacking those who are working for the nation.<sup>36</sup>

The Vietnam War ended in April 1975 and the compensation should have been offered to the soldier’s family. It is unclear to which government the student’s 2016 speech is addressed in regard to the non-compensation of the sacrifice of his mother’s brother-in-law. Another goal that the flag-carriers claim they pursue is the restoration of liberal democracy and the capitalist market economy, which they say are at risk of failing. In articulating such goals, the flag-carriers are expressing their beliefs in and seeking to preserve South Korea’s social structure and culture as they were under Park Geun-Hye, and which had their origins in the industrialization era. An important tool in this process is fake news or the dissemination of ultra-conservative opinions through social networking sites such as KaKaoTalk or YouTube, which have been highly effective in mobilizing flag-carriers’ grassroots supporters. In

35 Cho Won-Jin 2019. “문재인퇴진 태극기집회/대한애국당 조원진당대표의 사자후” (Taegukgi Rallies to Bring Down Moon Jae-In/ Representative of Our Republican Party). June 8, accessed May 15, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4M3LfZ7qfc>.

36 Speaker A 2016.

doing so, some conservative activists have monetized their YouTube channels and at the same time mobilized support for ultra-conservative causes.<sup>37</sup>

The desire of these activists to “stay put” is also evident in their frustration at their inability to elicit the changes that they want, and their occasional resorting to violence during protests. Their willingness to resort to violence and harassment puts them at odds with most South Koreans, who oppose the use of violence during protests, due to its association with violent incidents at other times in South Korean political history (Kim and Porteux 2019).

Rhetorically too, the speeches I have analysed at times hint at the need for violence to achieve their political goals. An alignment of perspectives between the flaggers and conservative Christians is evident in their shared visceral dislike of Moon Jae-In and anything socialist (Noh 1998; Bae 2010; Jeong et al. 2021). For the flag-carriers, Moon is a “demon” who should be killed, and some even say that his death would aid the South Korean economy.<sup>38</sup> It is puzzling to hear those Christians make the harsh public judgement of fellow Koreans. The flaggers blame Moon for pursuing “income-led growth” (소득주도성장론) which, they argue, will destroy South Korea’s capitalist economy, and call for his immediate impeachment.<sup>39</sup> Some of Moon’s critics, including members of the National Assembly, had assumed on the basis of Park’s impeachment that Moon too would be impeached before his presidency was scheduled to end in May 2022. Park served four years and nine months in prison and President Moon released Park from imprisonment with a special amnesty due to her ill health on December 31, 2021.<sup>40</sup> Moon Jae-In ended up serving his entire tenure of five years.

## Conclusion

In line with Yang Myungji (2020) findings, analysis of the flag-carriers’ speeches indicates that these activists were unwilling to accept South Korea’s newly configured socio-economic structures. Instead, they have tried to

37 e.g., 신의 한 수 (The Ultimate Key for Success), which is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgOLQwRv1r2m9mhEitfsn3Q/featured>. On this matter, conservative political parties and their advocates have the same argument against alternative media supporting the views of the progressive party.

38 Kim I.-S. 2018.

39 Heo in Yi, Heo and Lee 2019.

40 Park Geun-Hye published her autobiography at the time of her release from the prison, *그리움은 아무에게나 생기지 않습니다* (Longing Doesn’t Happen to Anyone), 2021. Seoul: Garo-Sero Research Institute.

restore South Korea's past. The ideas and values that inform their worldviews, such as Park Chung-Hee's authoritarian style of rule and growth-oriented economic values with little room for individual rights, are out of step with the mainstream of South Korean society in the 21st century. I have argued that a powerful minority has positioned itself in opposition to the majority, and sees any compromise on its beliefs as repudiating the deeds of the industrialization generation. The political ideology of the flag-carriers is thus *internally* coherent, but the intensity of that ideology has positioned the group on the margins of Korean politics. That is, it limits the flag-carriers' *external* influence in contemporary South Korea.

Despite espousing views that are extreme by the standards of contemporary South Korea, it was not inconceivable that the flag-carriers, and political leaders that they approved of, would regain power in the foreseeable future, which they achieved in the 2022 presidential election. The progressive forces led by President Moon remained in the political ascendancy as of early 2021, but public support for the administration and its policies in areas such as real estate has declined, which was one of the key reasons to lose the 2022 presidential election. Gallup Korea reported in December 2020 that support for Moon's Democratic Party had fallen to 34 per cent, and that of the People Power Party (the newly named major conservative opposition party) had increased to 21 per cent.<sup>41</sup> However, it looked improbable that the conservatives could win the 2022 presidential election due to their continuing setbacks since 2016. However, the long-lasting cartel of the conservative People Power Party, the media, and the Prosecution Service has worked in close cooperation for decades, and they were firmly in support of the former chief of the prosecution office, Yoon Suk-Yeol, who was appointed by President Moon but cut his two-year term short. The conservative party strategically chose him as the party's presidential candidate. As he was elected the 13th president of South Korea, there is a chance that the nation's political and economic democratization could slow down.

Another key finding of the analysis is that support for the flag-carriers may be limited, but it is surprisingly strong among younger South Koreans. Most younger voters in South Korea still tend to prefer progressive

41 Gallup Korea. 2020. "데일리 오피니언 2020년 월간·연간 통합—대통령 직무 수행 평가, 정당 지지도, 정치적 성향 (Daily Opinion 2020: The President's Performance, Support for Political Parties, Political Inclinations)," accessed January 20, 2021: <https://www.gallup.co.kr/gallupdb/reportContent.asp?seqNo=1165>. By way of comparison, in May 2020 support for the Democratic Party was 46 per cent and 18 per cent for the People Power Party.

candidates, but a sizeable minority has been attracted to the ideas that the flag-carriers and other conservatives have promoted.<sup>42</sup> Part of the answer to why, I suggest, comes down to politics: the flag-carriers, including their younger supporters and activists, fear that a progressive era in South Korean politics was emerging, which would result in further undesirable changes, including closer ties with North Korea. The flag-carriers, by contrast, want the Park Chung-Hee era (i.e., the industrialization era) to remain the defining phase of South Korean politics, and for the progressive administrations of Kim Dae-Jung (1988–2003), Roh Moo-Hyun (2003–2008), and Moon Jae-In (2017–2022) to be treated as unfortunate aberrations. Conservative leaders such as Lee Myung-Bak (2008–2013) and Park Geun-Hye (2013–2017) have based their legitimacy on their personal ties to the industrialization era, which supports the view that this period is quintessential to South Korean conservatives, including younger ones.

A second explanation for why the flag-carriers' nationalism resonates with some younger South Koreans relates to how nostalgia works in practice. As Benedict Anderson and other scholars of nationalism remind us, it is not necessary for people to have directly experienced a particular era for them to wish for it to return. The history of nationalism is replete with examples of national leaders calling for the return of an allegedly glorious but at least partly fictitious past. There is an element of this at play among the younger flag-carriers, many of whom were not even alive during the Park Chung-Hee (industrialization) era, but who have come to believe that the values of that era are worth protecting and reviving. There is an understandable attraction to the vision of an idealized past when South Koreans combined harmoniously to rescue the country from the ruins of war, and to rebuild their economy and society. At a time when younger South Koreans face poor prospects for finding jobs, buying homes, and starting families, it is understandable that some of them might feel a sense of vicarious pride about what they see as the admirable parts of a past era, even if they tend to overlook or downplay the shortcomings and costs of Park's dictatorship. For the March 9, 2022 presidential election, the conservative and progressive parties offered those in their twenties and thirties better life opportunities. The conservative party, the winner, has unfortunately played gender politics for the sake of political gain, which

42 In fact, in the 2022 presidential election, a high proportion of male voters in their twenties supported Yoon Suk-Yeol. According to the analysts of the 2022 presidential election, it seemed that younger voters are least committed to ideology but swing voters for their own benefits.

split those electorates. Younger women were depicted as taking advantage of feminist politics, campaigning to disadvantage younger men. Young men serving in the military service were offered a significant increase in their monthly allowance. The conservative party promised the abolition of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

A challenge for South Korean political leaders will be to respond to issues such as inequality, immigration, and multiculturalism (Yun 2017). These are the future-oriented issues that most resonate with many younger South Koreans, and political leaders should seek to therefore have positions on these concerns. As purported champions of a certain generation of South Koreans, and younger adherents to a conservative ideology, the flag-carriers have the potential to contribute to the development of policies on social and economic inequality, both of which affect people of all ages and ideological beliefs. Notions such as cultural diversity, mutual dependence, and social cooperation were not widely practiced during the era of rapid economic development, and will need to be restored to create a harmonious South Korea (Moon 2018).

Conservatism continues to be a body of political thought that has the potential to inform policy debates in South Korea, but the ideas it offers must be accompanied by political will. It is an open question as to how much adjustment the flag-carriers are willing and able to make in the foreseeable future. That is, they need to decide if they want to contribute to a conservative political movement that can attract the support of a majority of South Koreans, or if they will remain an anti-system force that is content to operate as a vocal but a permanent minority (cf., Kang 2020).<sup>43</sup> The evidence presented in this chapter is not encouraging for the prospects of moderation: the flag-carriers have refused to accept the legitimacy of their political opponents, and have positioned themselves as an explicitly anti-system force, in part due to their nostalgia for the Cold War era, and in part due to the dynamics of the impeachment battle. In the absence of moderation, the survival of South Korean democracy itself—a long-professed goal of the flag-carriers—must be in some doubt. This analysis of the emergence and operation of such a reactionary movement in South Korea will contribute to the broader study of contemporary politics in other Asian societies and other regions, where similar movements have emerged.

43 In the 2022 presidential election, the conservative coalition of People Power Party and People Party won the election against the progressive Democratic Party of Korea by 0.7 per cent.

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# 8 Standing against Workplace Bullying (*Gapjil*)

## Case Studies

### Abstract

Unfair treatment of workers at nearly all workplaces has been a prevalent concern in Korean society for decades and represents the unequal human relationship deeply embedded in the structural and cultural properties of Korean society, especially in the neoliberal economic context, which is discussed in Chapter 8. Under the emergent structural and cultural properties, individual agents of Korean society realize that their perception and capacity of the Korean nation-state have changed and should be reflected in their workplace accordingly. So are they engaging in social movements for better and fairer treatment of workers?

**Keywords:** workers' rights, workplace bullying, the Korean Air Nut Rage, "Workplace Bullying 119"

## Introduction

Following Korea's unprecedented economic and democratic development since the Second World War, recent Korean governments have been paying a great deal of attention to improving the grassroots' quality of life in response to the grassroots' desires expressed over recent decades. This is along the line of the international movement, as reflected in the World Happiness Report measuring eight topic areas, which ranked Korea in 59th place in the world in its 2002 report.<sup>1</sup> The OECD Better Life Index, measuring eleven topic areas, ranked Korea 29th in 2017 (Park 2019). Long working hours, the gender wage gap, sexual harassment, and workplace bullying (*gapjil*) have

1 <https://worldhappiness.report/>

been of particular concern to Korean workers, significantly impacting their quality of life. Of these lingering concerns, workplace bullying has become a topic of public interest only in recent years (Mun et al. 2017: 3–5). *Gapjil* is a relatively new term in Korea. The appearance of this new term in Korean could be evidence of either more bullying in recent years or, more likely, greater awareness that such bullying is not acceptable.

Koreans are well aware that Korean society has been hierarchical like other countries, as well as in a particular way, and power abuse in human relations has been common for decades. The features of hierarchy in practice differ from one era to another, even within a country. The abuse of bureaucratic power, especially during the military regimes, was not uncommon in public as well as private sectors. The legacies of Japanese colonialism cannot be downplayed. Most Koreans with no resources to resort to have experienced many forms of bullying. Potential victims of workplace bullying have been willing to take it for granted that in the culture of a growth-oriented economy, a degree of bullying is unavoidable. There have been many media reports on incidents of workplace bullying, and the public has now come to express explicitly that it is unacceptable. Yet workplace bullying continues in the ever transitional and more prosperous Korean society. This chapter is centred on the following questions: why has there been a sudden increase in the number of reports on workplace bullying? What are the socio-economic and cultural causes of workplace bullying in contemporary Korea? With reference to the book's aims, the focus of this chapter is to demonstrate the workplace is a very contentious battleground in the transitional Korean society, as workers have become more willing to protest against workplace bullying than ever before. Dominant groups, such as the owners of a corporation and its managers/superiors, continue to hold on to the authoritarian structure and culture, which may be conducive to and legitimize bullying, whereas most workers wish to see workplace bullying eliminated.

“Work” has been a way to bridge between individual agents' ultimate life concerns and *modi vivendi* in modern Korea, thus, the significance of work and working life cannot be overstated. People not only construct their personal identities through “work” but also ensure their social and economic positions through their work activities. Moreover, work “holds even the potential of being an emancipatory life strategy in mediating SEPs/CEPs” (structural and cultural emergent properties) (Wimalasena 2017: 396–398). In this respect, experiencing workplace harassment had not been something that the victims could easily protest against in the context of a growth-oriented Korean economy in the 1970s and 1980s. However, Koreans

in the 2000s have developed their own emergent properties in terms of what they want from work and how they respond to workplace bullying.

## Literature Review

Research on workplace bullying commenced in the west in the mid-1990s, and in Korea since the 2000s. Workplace bullying is a broad concept referring to actions such as vexing, rudeness, social exclusion, deliberately and negatively impacting on others' work, depriving one of information, publicly disrespecting others (Einarsen and Mikkelsen 2003; Djurkovic, McCormack, and Casimir 2008; cited in Mun et al. 2017: 6). Others have used the terms "counterproductive workplace behaviours" (CWBs), concerning "harmful behaviours at work" (Fox and Spector 2004; Spector and Fox 2010; cited in Bartlett and Bartlett 2011: 69). A synthesized definition of workplace bullying notes that it refers to "repeated unwelcomed negative act or acts (physical, verbal, or psychological intimidation)" (Bartlett and Bartlett 2011: 71), which may start with incivility, involve bullying, and become workplace violence (Namie 2003).

In their survey of the literature on workplace bullying, Bartlett and Bartlett (2011: 72) found that there are three overarching types: "work-related, personal, and physical/threatening." "Positional power" was identified as a common issue involving workplace bullying since the power discrepancy prompts "opportunities for the bully to exert power over the target" (p. 73). First, the forms of work-related bullying include giving heavy workloads, disallowing leave, taking away responsibilities, allocating menial tasks, "setting up individuals to fail in their job," unfair evaluation, and unnecessary monitoring (Bartlett and Bartlett 2011: 73). Second, there are direct and indirect methods of personal/ psychological bullying. Indirect personal bullying includes exclusion, isolation, and ignoring, such as not returning phone calls or emails, and false accusations (p. 74). Direct personal bullying involves "verbal harassment, belittling remarks, yelling, and interrupting others ... intentional demeaning, personal jokes, negative eye contact, and humiliation" (Bartlett and Bartlett 2011: 74). Third, more aggressive types of bullying include "intimidation, manipulation, and threats" (Von Bergen, Zavaletta, and Soper 2006; MacIntosh 2005; cited in Bartlett and Bartlett 2011: 75). These three broad types of bullying in the west are closely shared with those in other places, including Korea (Mun et al. 2017).

Workplace bullying causes severe personal and organizational impacts. Organizational impacts include decreased productivity, litigation costs,



health care costs, and high staff turnover (Ayoko, Callan, and Hartel 2003; Von Bergen, Zavaletta, and Soper 2006; cited in Bartlett and Bartlett 2011: 75). Personal impacts consist of “worker safety, job satisfaction, humiliation, fear, decreased group cohesiveness, job loss, and reduced performance,” in addition to physical and emotional health (Ayoko, Callan, and Hartel 2003; Parkins, Fishbein, and Ritchey 2006; cited in Bartlett and Bartlett 2011: 77).

In regard to the causes of workplace bullying across different societies, Mun et al. (2017) undertook an informative review of past studies, and they suggested the causes in three broad areas: individuals, workplaces, and the broader socio-cultural and economic context. First, individuals (both instigators and targets) may be exposed to work-related stress or specific jobs that are prone to high-level stress, which can then contribute to workplace bullying (Neuman and Baron 2003; Felson and Tedeschi 1993; cited in Park and Choi 2007; Bowling and Beehr 2006). Gender, age, education, length of employment, and types of employment (temporary, contingent, continuing) lead to power imbalance, the level of vulnerability, access to information, and social capital, thus contributing to workplace bullying, either positively or negatively (Seo and Yi 2016a; Song and Kim 2017: 43). Second, other studies looked directly into organizational structure and culture as the sources leading to bullying. They pointed out that conflicting or ambiguous roles, time pressure, and lack of challenges can contribute to bullying or mobbing (Cooper and Payne 1978; Einarsen and Raknes 1997; Park and Choi 2007; cited in Mun et al. 2017). Rigid hierarchy, authoritarian milieu, lack of communications, and severely competitive work environment can also lead to mobbing (Björkqvist, Österman, and Lagerspetz 1994; Vartia 1996; cited in Mun et al. 2017). Song and Kim (2017), in their research in the Korean context, identified that bullying is more likely to occur due to long working hours, pressure on deadlines, organizational restructuring, and employment types with uncertain prospects, whereas bullying is less likely to occur with supportive supervisors and constructive human networks within an organization (Yoo 2015).

Third, the broader socio-economic context facing the industries has also been influential, for example, continuing growth of service industries, reduced profit, and higher workload in the context of globalization, a decline of unionization of workers and their lack of negotiating power, diversification of the workforce joined by workers and migrants, excessive supervision of workers, and increased reliance on contingent workers (Yamada 2000; Mun et al. 2017). Researching the impact of these socio-economic contexts on workplace bullying is limited.

Research on bullying in Korea has been centred on specific service professionals and industries such as hospital nurses, airplane stewards, restaurant employees, and factory workers (e.g., Yoo 2015). Korean-based research heavily utilizes the insights learned from past research findings and analyses undertaken in North America and Europe, especially with reference to the instigators/targets and workplace organizations. Korean research findings broadly share how socio-economic and cultural factors influence workplace bullying. However, empirical research in this area is scarce. A small number of local research findings available are limited in illustrating the impact of socio-economic and cultural factors in the local context (e.g., Song and Kim 2017; Seo 2013; Gu et al. 2015; Seo and Yi 2016b; Seo and Yi 2016a; Song 2016). A Korean-specific finding from Gu et al. (2015: 120) was that Korean men tend to regard working life as an extension of their national military service, thus, it is taken for granted that some degree of workplace bullying is inevitable, which supports the culture of hierarchy and bullying. Another influential factor specific to Korean society is long working hours (Song 2016). Notably, Seo (2016) reported that her study participants perceive individual instigators as the key sources of bullying, whereas western studies point to organizational factors as key sources. Local studies increasingly point out that organizational work culture and strong hierarchical power structures are influential causes of workplace bullying (Park and Choi 2007; Kang and Ko 2014; Yoo 2015; Seo and Yi 2016b; Song 2016; Jo and Han 2019). In particular, Yoo (2015: 252) identifies organizational cultures to be crucial factors, which include an ongoing culture of organizational restructuring, performance-oriented management, and an overly competitive environment, which reflect the neoliberal economic climate of contemporary Korean society.

Undoubtedly, individual workers and workplaces are the necessary foci to investigate in ascertaining the causes of bullying. However, the workers and workplaces in turn closely reflect the given cultural and socio-economic factors as well recognized by Yamada (2000) and Einarsen et al. (2011). For example, there will be some differences in how workplace bullying is instigated in the west, where a merit-based professional reward is better established and in other nation-states where, in addition to one's merit, indigenous cultures and traditions such as chronological seniority and birth backgrounds have roles in workplaces. Every workplace is subject to the given labour market, socio-economic environment, legal jurisdiction, and relevant administrative protocols of a specific nation-state. This implies that there are often variations between the provinces within a nation-state. The 1997 IMF's economic intervention in the Korean economy and the 2008 global

financial crisis affected Korean industries in terms of a wage gap between the workers at conglomerates and those at small/middle-sized companies, increased number of contingent workers, and increased performance-based wages (Mun et al. 2017: 24).

I have reviewed the literature on workplace bullying regarding the changing structure and culture, as well as the impact on the component members as an instigator or targets. The general focus of this book is political and economic democratization, justice, human rights, and fraternity. Examining the topic of workplace bullying, and the relationship between the work environment, bullying, and mobbing in the workplace (e.g., Choi and Park 2010), the focus of this chapter is to demonstrate how workers protest against bullying and reclaim “respect,” human dignity in the workplace, and quality of working life. I contend that the following two dimensions are broadly missing in the literature. First, past studies recognize the intersectionality among the instigator/target, organizational characteristics, and the broader socio-economic environment. However, the dynamics of these elements have not been fully incorporated into the analysis. Intersectionality between structure/culture and agency needs to be better considered since individual agents’ (both the instigator and target) actions do not occur in a social vacuum. Second, taking the action of bullying is not a result of a simple decision, thus, it should be noted that it is related to individual reflexivity, referring to the agency of the agents. Individual agents are required to make up their minds and present their creative but varied reflexive responses to best mediate structural and cultural emergent properties through internal conversation (Archer 2007), i.e., a thought process based on the given complex situations of the workplace and broader society.

### **A Morphogenetic Approach**

In the last several decades, Korean social structure and culture have been rapidly changing, thus, the agents, especially the grassroots, have been changing their anticipations as to how they should be treated in workplaces. However, most of those in dominant positions are slow to realize the changes in the surrounding structure and culture. They are preoccupied with the pre-existing culture of domination amongst them and ignore the new culture of protesting, which results in supporting the continuation of workplace harassment. Space, place, and time in a given context enable and constrain the characteristics of human interactions (Edwards and Brehm 2015: 275). The nature of space, place, and time constantly changes, and this

affects human interactions. One's lack of understanding of the emergent properties of the given space, place, and time can lead to conflicting human relations. In brief, what is acceptable or not in human interaction changes over space, place, and time. These can be best understood by examining the interplay between structure, culture, and agents (Archer 2010: 274). As Korean society has undergone rapid changes but is still under a dual system of traditionally oppressive and modern features, those who hold dominant power will often face a tension between the status quo and the change in their human interactions (Edwards and Brehm 2015: 287). Agents' everyday work activities generally involve appropriate coordination of their personal emergent properties in the given context of space and time—i.e., what Margaret Archer calls reflexivity.

When the individuals fail to conduct their interactions appropriately or are out of the social norms, in particular structural and cultural contexts, they can pay a heavy price, and their personal emergent properties (i.e., the actions they can take) cannot be reduced to social contexts (Wimalasena 2017: 398). Deploying Archer's structural, cultural, and people's emergent properties, I analyse news reportages with reference to the socio-economic environment and labour market (structure), relevant regulations and administrative protocols subject to the government's control, and relevant policies and responses within each company (culture), and primary agents and actors.

## Research Methods

News reportages or audio-visual reports are valuable as they often represent current affairs. What affairs are news-worthy is determined by editors and reporters, yet significantly represent the public or grassroots' interests and concerns. Thus, an analysis of the media narratives demonstrates much of emergent structural, cultural, and component members' properties. The readers' comments on news reportages also represent grassroots' responses to the phenomena and incidents under report. Yet, they are relatively limited in their scope, mostly agreeing or disagreeing with the news reportages.

In this chapter, I have analysed media reportages and investigated structural and cultural emergent properties that demonstrate the prevalent social contexts as morphogenetic preconditioning and the current contexts that enable and constrain component members of Korean society. I have also analysed the personal emergent properties of the victims and the instigators in their human interactions at their workplace. Workplace

bullying was not publicly exposed in Korea until the 2000s. Increasingly concerned with workplace bullying, a recent *Yonhap News TV* reported “those [five] bullying incidents that wrathed us.”<sup>2</sup> In addition to those five bullying incidents, I shall add two cases that I recall particularly vividly. The selected reportages have been covered heavily throughout the Korean media outlets. There is little discrepancy across these diverse outlets in terms of their reporting of the facts. I have consulted different media outlets to diversify the sources of reportage, and best represent each incident in terms of workplace bullying.

## Findings

I report the seven cases in brief as to what happened and provide my analysis of each case based on the identification of relevant structural, cultural, and agential emergent properties, followed by the common features of workplace bullying in contemporary Korea. Those seven cases under analysis occurred between 2014 and 2020. My key aim in analysing the following empirical cases is not only to demonstrate the common features of bullying, but more importantly to demonstrate the bullying targets' responses to their experiences, which are increasingly becoming outspoken rather than being silent. Those cases have widely been reported in the legacy media and many types of social media, including Facebook, YouTube, and internet café. The cases will theoretically illustrate the intertwined relations between the structural, cultural, and individual components' properties. Following the presentation and analysis of the seven cases, I shall also present Workplace Bullying 119 as a case of the grassroots movement taking a stance against workplace bullying.

### Case 1: Bullying Incidents within Namyang Dairy Products<sup>3</sup>

In January 2013, many distributing agencies of Namyang Dairy Products complained that the company dumped unwanted products at the agencies' stores. The goods were close to use-by-date or in low demand. The

2 *Yonhap News TV*. 2020. “우리를 분노하게 했던 ‘갑질’ 사건들” (The Bullying Incidents That Angered Us). May 21, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/MYH20200521015300640>, accessed September 30, 2020.

3 *Media SR*. 2018. “남양유업의 ‘슈퍼 갑질’ 연대기” (A Series of Super Bullying by Namyang Dairy Products). January 9, <http://www.mediasr.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=46560>, accessed October 5, 2020.

company denied the allegation and sued the agencies. However, in May 2013, a salesperson from Namyang Dairy Products again dumped a good amount of unwanted products at one of its distributing agencies. The agent refused to accept them, and produced the salesperson's recorded messages of bullying as follows:

Can't accept them? You can please yourself. I'm gonna kill you. You can distribute them quickly, or I can be cruel to you. Keep your mobile phone turned on, or else. I don't care if your business collapses.<sup>4</sup>

Korean Fair Trade Commission investigated Namyang Dairy Products and found the company guilty of forcibly dumping the unwanted products at all the stores of its distributing agencies. Within a few days, another salesperson of the company was caught, taking a bribe from an agent, which was evidenced by a recorded message and money transmission. The company representatives soon held a press conference to apologize to the nation. Moreover, the company's female employees, who held permanent jobs, were categorized as contract workers upon their marriage, with a 10 per cent reduction of the wage and removal of some allowances. They were then forced to quit their jobs upon pregnancy. Some women tried to control the timing of pregnancy as they wanted to stay at work as long as possible. Namyang Dairy Products then redressed the female workers' rights, which had been routinely forfeited till then. *YTN News* reported that Namyang Co. had been the most preferred company for baby food and had its catchphrase—"We are together with mothers' minds,"—but bullying the future mothers.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, one of Namyang's distributing agencies was involved in bullying its own employee who delivered the products to its customers' homes. The part-time worker (a university student) delivered milk to eighty homes and earned \$320 per month. When the student acquired an internship opportunity at a corporation and informed the distributing agency of his departure, he was told to find another deliverer, or he would be charged \$4,000 (i.e., \$50 per household). The student managed to find another worker and avoided the penalty. There was public anger in response to this, and a large number of consumers boycotted Namyang Dairy Products. The brand

4 "남양유업의 '슈퍼 갑질' 연대기" (A Series of Super Bullying by Namyang Dairy Products).

5 *YTN News*. 2013. "'임신하면 퇴사' ... 남양유업 횡포 (Jobs Taken Away After Pregnancy)." June 27, [https://www.ytn.co.kr/\\_ln/0103\\_201306271807234902](https://www.ytn.co.kr/_ln/0103_201306271807234902), accessed October 5, 2020.

image was damaged, and its share price fell; its share price peaked at \$1,175 on May 3, 2013, and it continued to fall to \$259 on October 5, 2020.<sup>6</sup>

Namyang displayed a chain of bullying within the operation of the company and its agencies. Those working for the company headquarters seemed to feel empowered to bully those running the distributing agencies due to uneven relations of authority and economic power. The distributors then mistreated their own employees. The news reportage indicated bribes as an element in the process of bullying. The company's mistreatment of its female workers was outdated and no less than bullying. Indeed, unfair treatment of women has been deeply enculturated in Korean workplaces (Kim and Cho 2017). Recategorizing the female workers into less secure positions exposed them to an easy lay-off (Yoon 2020). What is apparent is that an exploitative relationship is intransitive and common through the hierarchical chain, based on the economic structure and relationship between the employer and employee. The culture of exploitation must have been prolonged, and those who were "higher" in the hierarchy were reluctant to change. However, some agents were reluctant to persevere anymore, and the consumers would not tolerate the bullying they observed.

The emergent social climate has become increasingly anti-bullying, and the agents' proactive protest against the bullying has started to make a difference. Women's equal opportunity has a long way to go, but it is slowly changing. Newly emergent structure and culture are initiated for articulation by the component members of workplaces. In other words, potential victims and social actors actively stand against the mistreatment at work and attempt to modify the unfriendly structure and culture.

### **Case 2: CEO's Hacking His Employees' Mobile Phones and Bashing Them**

Korea Future Technology is a promising corporation which develops industrial robots and employs 160 workers.<sup>7</sup> Of several items under court proceedings as of November 2020, Mr. Yang Jin-Ho, the company's CEO, was accused of hacking his employees' mobile phones and viewing 60,000 private messages between 2012 and 2013. The workers were told to install

6 <http://www.dailyimpact.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=46560>; <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b--d&q=남양유업의+주가>, accessed October 5, 2020.

7 *JobKorea*. Korea Future Technology, [http://www.jobkorea.co.kr/Recruit/Co\\_Read/C/miraetech1976](http://www.jobkorea.co.kr/Recruit/Co_Read/C/miraetech1976), accessed October 5, 2020.

“Hitalk” on their mobile phones and the tailor-made application allowed Mr. Yang to access all the activities made through mobile phones—photos, phone calls, messages, location, banking transmission, and all other private matters. Mr. Yang boasted his awareness of personal information and at times intervened in the employees’ private activities.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Yang came across a former employee’s five critical comments on the company’s bulletin board. Yang brought the employee to the company’s shared office in a big open space and slapped in the face of the former employee indiscriminately. When a video clip was released, the incident raised public anger throughout the nation.<sup>9</sup>

*Segye Ilbo* reported there have been many other violent attacks in other companies, where company CEOs with unequivocal authority and economic power have been violent against their workers, e.g., a CEO bashing one-man protestor with a baseball bat in front of spectators. The newspaper cited Professor Yun Sang-Cheol saying that those CEOs take it for granted that they live a life remote from ordinary people and they think they deserve extreme privileges, and that their egoism is fostered in their limited sphere of control. Yun also argued that those CEOs’ violent bullying is “a combined result of their attitude to rule over others and the power of money.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, human relationship predominantly based on economic structure reproduces a culture of exploitation, leading to bullying. Yun’s analysis applies to the case of Yang, too. Moreover, the Confucian culture of respecting older persons often puts the younger persons in a vulnerable situation. Korean men’s embodiment of the military culture of commanding and obeying also contributes to bullying and authoritarianism in the workplace (cf., Janelli 1993; Graham 1991).<sup>11</sup>

8 *Kyunghyang Sinmun*. 2018. “양진호, 직원 전체 휴대전화 해킹...여직원에게 ‘어제 클럽에서 잘 놀던데?’” (Yang Jin-Ho, Hacking All the Phones of the Employees). November 9, [http://sports.khan.co.kr/bizlife/sk\\_index.html?art\\_id=201811091259003&sec\\_id=560101&utm\\_source=msn&utm\\_medium=referral](http://sports.khan.co.kr/bizlife/sk_index.html?art_id=201811091259003&sec_id=560101&utm_source=msn&utm_medium=referral), accessed October 5, 2020;

9 *Dong-a Ilbo*. 2020. “갑질폭행·양진호, 징역 7년 불복...항소 제기” (Bullying and Bashing, Mr. Yang, Appealed Against Seven-Year in Prison). June 2, <https://www.donga.com/news/Society/article/all/20200602/101320090/1>, accessed October 5, 2020; *Yonhap News*. 2018. “한국미래기술 양진호 회장, 전직 직원 무차별 폭행” (Korea Future Technology’s CEO, Yang Jin-Ho, Indiscriminately Bashing a Former Employee). October 30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTW7wBlx0O4>, accessed October 5, 2020.

10 *Segye Ilbo*. 2018. “돈·권력으로 갑질·군림... ‘法도 있는 자 편’ 처벌 약해” (Bullying with Money and Power ... The Law Stands on the Side of the Haves and the Punishment Is Light). November 4, <http://www.segye.com/newsView/20181104002007>, accessed October 6, 2020.

11 *Maeil Kyongje*. 2018. “직장에서도 법대로 합시다...권위주의 갑질 ‘그만’” (Let’s Practise What Is Legal at Workplace as Well ... No More *Gapjil* Based on Authoritarianism). January 1, <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/society/view/2018/01/422/>, accessed October 17, 2020.



### Case 3: An Army General and His Spouse: Abusing Power

General Park Chan-Ju of the Korean Army, his spouse, and a son lived in an independent house provided by the government and the couple was supported by two soldiers assisting with home duties. In recent years the couple, especially Mrs. Park, developed a notorious reputation.<sup>12</sup> The couple have been accused of numerous mistreatments of the soldiers on duty, which has attracted much media attention and raised public anger. First, General Park's residence is a two-storey house (529m<sup>2</sup>) and there is a remote-control bell on each storey to call the soldier, who wears an electronic bracelet that rings upon the operation of the remote control. The bell is used to request menial tasks such as "bring a cup of water." When the soldier took more time than Mrs. Park wanted, she threw the remote at the soldier or threatened to send him to jail. Second, the serving soldier was told to stay late until the older son returns home and the son is served a night snack. When their younger son, serving in the Airforce, returned home for a vacation, the serving soldier prepared a private barbeque party.<sup>13</sup> Third, while the younger son was home for a vacation, the serving soldier had to wash the son's underpants.

Fourth, Mrs. Park asked the serving soldier to give her son a plate of pancakes, which the soldier forgot. Mrs. Park threw the pancakes at the soldier's face. Yet just as the couple's son was serving in the Airforce, so is the assaulted soldier engaged in the national service. The soldier is also a precious son in a family. He is not a servant and is not supposed to be put to work undertaking "private" tasks of General Park's family. Fifth, those who worked as a chef or as an assistant at Park's home followed diverse religions, including Buddhism. However, those soldiers working at Park's home were all "taken" to the church with no choice. Sixth, one day, a serving soldier could not bear Mrs. Park's bullying behaviour and had to stay outside the home. General Park came to learn this and accused the soldier, "If you leave this home, it is desertion. My wife is much like a Brigadier General and you must be courteous to her!" The national service is mandatory for Korean men and is a matter of interest for all Korean households. Thus the bullying of a soldier attracted nationwide attention.

12 *Namu Wiki*. 2020. "박찬주 육군 대장 부부 갑질 사건" (General Park Chan-Ju and His Spouse: Bullying). Last updated October 2, 2020, [https://namu.wiki/w/박찬주 육군 대장 부부 갑질](https://namu.wiki/w/박찬주_육군_대장_부부_갑질), accessed October 6, 2020.

13 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2017. "박찬주 대장 부부, 전자팔찌 채워 수시로 호출 추가 제보 쏟아져" (General Park Chan-Ju Couple, Use of Electronic Bracelet to Call the Serving Soldier). August 2, 2017, [http://m.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/805191.html#cb](http://m.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/805191.html#cb), accessed October 7, 2020.

The compulsory national service for men comes with a considerable cost for them and the nation but is required for national security. The management of soldiers has been democratized over the years. Military personnel's rank is particularly crucial and is the only criterion that determines who the seniors or juniors are. The culture of power abuse was common in the past. Unfortunately, some senior officers, in particular, see the soldiers' hierarchical ranks marked on their caps, but are unable to see the real values of every individual soldier as a human. In this case, the hierarchical ranks dominate human relationships in the military community, which is what happened in General Park's household. Hierarchical ranks are common in any part of human history. However, assistant soldiers should not be regarded as enslaved people, but should be treated fairly. General Park and Mrs. Park seemed to have ignored the emergent cultural properties, and they paid a high cost. The media reportage of the case has been possible in part due to the emergent structural and cultural properties in the Army and the victims' reluctance (i.e., personal emergent properties) to tolerate abuse.

#### **Case 4: The Korean Air CEO's Family and the Nut Rage**

At 0:50 am, December 5, 2014, Korean Air Flight KE086 was heading to a runway at the JFK Airport. Instead of proceeding to take off, the flight returned to the terminal and dropped off the chief steward, Mr. Park Chang-jin. What happened? Ms. Cho Hyun-A, then vice-president of Korean Air, was travelling in the first-class cabin and was served a packet of macadamia nuts. Cho accused the serving steward of not following the manual for serving the snack and called in the chief steward, who argued that no mistake was made in the way the snack was served. Cho did not back down and had the serving and chief stewards kneel on the floor. Cho shouted at Park and said, "Go and tell the pilot to stop the flight!" Park responded that "the flight is soon to take off, and it cannot be stopped." Cho said, "Don't you dare go against what I say?" Using the serving manual file, Cho hit Park's hands and also pushed Park on his shoulder.<sup>14</sup> Returning the moving flight to the terminal was highly controversial in regard to safety. Three years and four months after the incident, Cho took up the role of CEO of a hotel within Hanjin Conglomerate, of which Korean Air is a branch, whereas Park had

<sup>14</sup> *Yonhap News*. 2015. "재벌 딸 갑질로 시작된 '땅콩회항' 사건 전말 169일" (A Conglomerate Daughter and Her Bullying: 169 Days of the Nut Rage). May 22, 2015, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20150522123700004>, accessed October 9, 2020.

an operation to remove a tumor at the back of his head, which he developed as a result of extreme stress from the incident.<sup>15</sup>

Also notorious for bullying was Ms. Lee Myung-Hee, who is Cho's mother and the spouse of the President of Hanjin Conglomerate. Of the endless list of accusations about her behaviour, here are some. Once her chauffeur-driven vehicle arrived later than the agreed time; getting in the vehicle, she spat on the face of the driver and shouted at him to pull over the vehicle. On another occasion, Lee asked her driver to speed up, but he could not respond to her request. She then threw a plastic cup filled with water at the driver's head. Another time, when the driver had to make an abrupt stop, Lee kicked the back of the driver's seat and said, "How dare you attempt to kill me?" Lee was also accused of throwing other dangerous items at workers, including books, a ruler, a scotch tape dispenser, scissors, a bunch of keys, and a pot plant. One worker was standing on a ladder three metres above the ground while completing a task. Lee was not happy with the worker's performance and kicked away the ladder, making him fall to the ground.<sup>16</sup>

Cho Hyun-A's privilege to travel in the first-class cabin may be considered a given privilege, but she went far beyond what others consider acceptable. Returning the moving flight on a busy runway was risky, and suggests there was nothing beyond her commandment. What distinguishes Cho most from others is her economic wealth as a daughter of a conglomerate president. Does this entitle her to harass her diligent workers? Cho's mother, Lee Myung-Hee, was at the centre of media attention for her completely erratic and violent behaviours against her employees. In fact, Cho's sister, former deputy CEO of Jin Air, was accused of violent behaviour against two subcontractors. The public developed unfavourable views of the Cho family. From the viewpoints of the Cho family, they may consider their harassment of workers justified because of their advantageous economically exploitative positions of power. The public increasingly thinks otherwise and is reluctant to tolerate the harassment directly and indirectly.

15 *JTBC News*. 2018. "조현아 복귀, 박창진은 종양 수술... '땅콩 회항' 엇갈린 삶" (Cho Hyun-A Returns, Park Chang-Jin Goes to a Surgery ... Their Contrasting Features). March 29, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvUN2lkyWzM>, accessed October 9, 2020.

16 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2019. "얼굴에 침 뱉고 물컵 던지고...한진그룹 이명희 '갑질폭행실상'" (Spitting on the Face, Throwing a Water Cup: Reality of Lee Myung-Hee's Bullying). January 30, 2019, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/880454.html#csidx5e14f8fda563a4b9a225fd579949a4d](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/880454.html#csidx5e14f8fda563a4b9a225fd579949a4d), accessed October 9, 2020.

## Case 5: An Apartment Guard

Along with urbanization and industrialization since the 1960s, a large number of the rural Korean population moved to the cities. More than a quarter of the Korean population, or more than ten million people, live in the Seoul metropolitan area, where the construction of the “apartment forest” heavily began in the 1980s. It is common that a few to several apartment buildings form a gated community, and a gatekeeper or apartment guard is employed. Three-day professional education is required to qualify for the job, and the job entails general protection of and services to the residents. The job is popular for those in their 50s or 60s and pays about \$2,000 per month, which is a relatively low wage in Korea.<sup>17</sup> On May 10, 2020, Mr. Choi Hee-Seok, an apartment guard in Wooidong, Seoul, took his life after suffering from a series of bullying by an apartment resident involving physical and verbal assaults. The victim left a note saying, “I am mortified.”<sup>18</sup> The bullying started on April 21, 2020 when Choi moved along a resident’s (Mr. Shim) double-parked car to facilitate other vehicles’ moving in and out of the crowded car park, which is a common practice for these guards. Several days later, on April 27, Shim assaulted Choi and broke his nose, because of the car parking incident, in the toilet attached to the guard’s office, causing injury requiring three weeks of treatment. Recognizing Choi’s injury, some residents held an urgent meeting to provide support. Choi sued Shim for the damages. Shim soon counter-sued Choi for defamation and put Choi under pressure, producing a medical certificate (which was later found irrelevant to the incident). Shim’s misdeeds were broadly reported in the media and tremendously angered the Korean public. As of May 19, 2020, more than 400,000 people signed a petition to have the incident properly addressed. Shim was imprisoned on May 22, 2020, and the court case was still under consideration as of October 13, 2020.<sup>19</sup> The Korean Supreme Court sentenced the suspect to five years imprisonment, and Shim will be released on May 19, 2025. Following the incident, more space for the car park has been created,

17 Naver Blog. 2019. “아파트 경비원에 대해서 알아보자” (Information About the Job of Apartment Guard, *KBS 경비/교육원* (KBS Institute to Train the Apartment Guard), November 29, 2019, <http://blog.naver.com/PostView.nhn?blogId=namjwo323&logNo=221721864073>, accessed October 13, 2020.

18 *Namu Wiki*. 2020. “우이동 아파트 경비원 갑질 사망 사건” (Death of an Apartment Guard in Wooidong: A Case of Bullying). *Namu Wiki*, September 9, 2020, [https://namu.wiki/w/우이동\\_아파트\\_경비원\\_갑질\\_사망\\_사건](https://namu.wiki/w/우이동_아파트_경비원_갑질_사망_사건), accessed October 13, 2020.

19 “우이동 아파트 경비원 갑질 사망 사건” (Death of an Apartment Guard in Wooidong: A Case of Bullying). *Namu Wiki*.

and the apartment provided the guards with a better staffroom.<sup>20</sup> From January 2021, Security Guard Harassment Prevention Act has been enforced.

Aside from Shim's other misbehaviours and bullying behaviours reported in the media, apartment residents' bullying of apartment guards is common. For example, since the death of Choi, Seoul Police Station provided an opportunity for people to report any bullying against the apartment guard. During May 2020, thirty-three incidents were reported, from which fourteen cases were handed over to the Prosecution Office and sixteen cases were still under investigation.<sup>21</sup> The residents of an apartment building share a significant amount of space and facilities. Most of the residents may be financially better off than their gatekeepers, which for a small number of people is a justifying reason to look down upon the gatekeepers and mistreat them. The case under analysis is not one of few such incidents but one of many. This culture of harassment against gatekeepers is underpinned by the long-lasting structural properties that are still prevalent in materialistic Korean society, and which some Korean scholars consider the most neo-liberal in the world as displayed in the internationally popular TV series, *Squid Game*.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, many residents of apartments have found the harassment unacceptable and raised concerns against the instigator and this issue more broadly.

### Case 6: VIP Customers and the Department Store Parking Attendants

A bullying incident occurred between two VIP customers (mother and daughter) and three parking attendants in the car park of Hyundai Department Store in Bucheon City on December 27, 2014. Late December is always busy at the department stores and their car parks. A VIP customer occupied two parking spaces rather than one, and a parking attendant requested the customer move the vehicle. The customer responded her daughter had not arrived yet and she "would move the car later." Departing to attend to other drivers, the parking attendant was moving his arms like a boxer, which

20 JTBC. 2021. "경비노동자 죽음 내몬 주민 징역 5년 확정, 그리고..." (The Resident Sentenced to 5 Years Imprisonment for Causing the Death of an Apartment Guard, and...). August 29, 2021, [https://n.news.naver.com/article/437/0000274878?cde=news\\_edit](https://n.news.naver.com/article/437/0000274878?cde=news_edit), accessed December 10, 2021.

21 Petition to the Blue House. "청원답변" (Response to a Petition to the Blue House). <https://www1.president.go.kr/petitions/588752>, accessed October 13, 2020.

22 International popularity of the *Squid Game* is not due to the worldwide interest about Korean economy, but its similarity to the prevalent and exploitative economy in operation throughout the world. The episodes have brilliantly illustrated the common features of the neoliberal economy.

seemed to be for the young man to keep his body moving and physically active. The attendant's arms movement may have been considered a threat to the customer, which then ignited a quarrel leading to bullying.<sup>23</sup> The customer had the parking attendant kneel on the floor. Three other attendants came along and tried to have the kneeling attendant stand up. However, the customer also had the three attendants (university students) forced on their knees on the cold floor of the car park, of which a photo was disclosed. The young attendants were required to continue kneeling for more than an hour, or close to two hours.<sup>24</sup> The VIP customer later visited the department store and said she was mortified. She then lay on the floor and had a tantrum, shouting, "I am spending my own money. Why should I be humiliated by the parking attendant and be treated badly?" An ambulance took her to an emergency room in a hospital to help her calm down. The parking attendant was preoccupied with how to earn his university tuition, which made him obey the customer and kneel. A witness later repeated the VIP customer's shouting at the parking attendant, "Don't you see this expensive vehicle? Do you see it as a hoopty? I have had many other powerful persons kneel in front of me. My husband's words can easily sack all of you."<sup>25</sup>

A controversial issue has been that kneeling is a serious form of submission in Korean culture and no longer common especially for young people with pride. The public raised the question, "Is it a serious enough issue to make those proud young men kneel?" The bullying woman argued that "the reason to have the parking attendant on his knees was that she couldn't bash him up, thus having them on their knees was for the sake of social justice."<sup>26</sup> An informed TV discussion of the incident noted that the customer spent \$6,000 on the day of the incident.<sup>27</sup> Media commentator, Professor Choi Chang-Ryeol argued that the repetition of similar cases at

23 *Namu Wiki*. 2020. "갑과 을" (A and B or the Dominant and the Dominated). October 10, 2020, <https://namu.wiki/w/갑과%20을?from=갑질>, accessed October 14, 2020.

24 *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. 2015. "백화점 갑질 모녀, 알바생 3명 2시간동안 무릎 꿇려" (Bullying Mother and Daughter at the Department Store, Keeping the 3 Attendants on Their Kneeling). January 15, 2015, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society\\_general/672124.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/society_general/672124.html), accessed October 14, 2020.

25 *Mydaily*. 2015. "그것이 알고싶다, 백화점 모녀 "을의 횡포...마녀사냥이다" 주장" (The Customer Argues She Is the Victim). January 11, 2015, [http://www.mydaily.co.kr/new\\_yk/html/read.php?newsid=2015011119421111](http://www.mydaily.co.kr/new_yk/html/read.php?newsid=2015011119421111), accessed October 14, 2020.

26 "그것이 알고싶다, 백화점 모녀 "을의 횡포...마녀사냥이다" 주장."

27 *Channel A News*. 2015. "백화점 모녀 갑질 사건의 진실은? 주차요원 인터뷰 공개" (Bullying Mother and Daughter at the Department Store, What Is Truth? Revealing an Interview with the Parking Attendant). January 8, 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vudo\\_W4ZnGo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vudo_W4ZnGo), accessed October 14, 2020.

department stores indicates that Korean society is preoccupied with the power of money.<sup>28</sup> That is, human relationships are centred on the power of money. In a consumeristic society, the power to spend large amounts of money at a department store must be something that the “haves” enjoy showing off. The bullying customer seems to think the parking attendant who earns little has no right to humiliate the wealthy customer under any circumstances. Is an expensive vehicle worth more than the worker’s rights? Similar to General Park’s family, the bullying customer seems to ride on the back of her rich and powerful spouse and boasts a history of making others kneel in front of her. As she resorted to her economic and structural properties, her definition of “social justice” differs from that of most others who are increasingly exposed to, and become aware of, the changing and emergent cultural and personal properties. Indeed, more Koreans are now empowered by the emergent cultural properties and willing to stand against injustices.

### Case 7: A Hollow Death of a Prosecutor

Kim Hong-Yeong, a junior prosecutor (33 years old), took his own life at his home on June 19, 2016 after experiencing a long period of psychological suffering resulting from verbal assaults and public humiliations from his senior chief prosecutor (Kim Dae-Hyun). The victim’s father claimed that the chief prosecutor was responsible for his son’s death. The victim’s colleagues had witnessed the chief prosecutor’s bullying behaviours of physical and verbal assaults against his many junior colleagues.<sup>29</sup> It was later discovered that the chief prosecutor asked the victim to find and book a private room for group drinking, which the victim could not secure, which then angered the chief prosecutor. The victim also requested personal leave based on a family matter, which the senior refused to approve. In connection with past crimes on seventeen occasions, the bullying senior prosecutor (Kim Dae-Hyun) was fired. Kim appealed against the court decision but this eventually failed in March 2019. Three years after the loss of his senior prosecutor’s job, he applied to register as a lawyer. The death of the junior prosecutor caused some degree of self-reflection amongst the prosecutors’ community in Korea; however,

28 “백화점 모녀 갑질 사건의 진실은? 주차요원 인터뷰 공개.”

29 *Joongang Ilbo*. 2020. “아들, 부장검사 폭언에 힘들어했다” (My Son Suffered from Chief Prosecutor’s Verbal Abuse). June 27, 2016, <https://news.joins.com/article/20224040>, accessed October 14, 2020.

it is known that the culture of bullying has been and remains prevalent in the Korean legal community.<sup>30</sup>

Prosecutors have uncompromisingly been one of the most elite professionals in Korea ever since the time of Japanese colonialism. They also make a group in which a rigid hierarchical structure is in place, of which the network operates within and beyond the prosecution office. The hierarchy works much like that in the Army. When a junior prosecutor surpasses the rank of his/her current senior who passed the qualifying exam ahead of the junior, the senior often resigns from the job. Thus being a senior holds power over their juniors professionally and personally. Prosecutors, as the ones to keep justice and fairness, are one thing, but how their human relationships operate within the profession seems to be another (Yi Y 2020). Ms. Ihm Eun-Jeong, who has been a prosecutor for sixteen years, confirms that she has experienced several senior prosecutors misbehaving and harassing and the culture of harassment within her profession is real (see Yi Y 2020). She says, “the prosecutor’s death is hollow.”<sup>31</sup> A well-known problem with the prosecutors’ harassment is that prosecutors are responsible for their colleagues’ misdeeds and the culprits are rarely brought to justice.<sup>32</sup> However, the privileged structural properties become the goals of the aspiring university students to pursue and their professional and cultural properties become embedded in the lives of prosecutors as a group of agents (Veblen 2016; Kim 2021: 241) who are likely to pursue the status quo of their professional culture, which has offered the professionals many material benefits for decades. On the list of Moon Jae-In regime’s rooting out deep-rooted corruption since 2017, the Prosecution Service is one. The public has been made aware that the Office is not prepared to reform its current structure and create a new structure and culture. In general, the Office is neither prepared to self-reform

30 *Namu Wiki*. 2020. “검사(법조인)/사건 사고” (Incidents to Do with Prosecutors and Legal Professionals). September 30, 2020, [https://namu.wiki/w/검사\(법조인\)/사건%20사고](https://namu.wiki/w/검사(법조인)/사건%20사고), accessed October 14, 2020; “30대 검사 자살에 법조계 자성의 목소리” (Self-Reflection in the Prosecutors’ Community after the Death of the Junior Prosecutor). *YTN News*, June 27, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQMN7j-ZXQ4>, accessed October 14, 2020.

31 *Kyunggyang Sinmun*. 2016. “임은정 검사 ‘남부지검 검사 허무한 죽음, 연판장 돌려야’” (Prosecutor Ihm Eun-Jeong, A Hollow Death of a Prosecutor Requires Collecting the Colleagues’ Views). June 27, 2016, [http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_news/khan\\_art\\_view.html?artid=201606270900001](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201606270900001), accessed October 19, 2020.

32 One of the current related efforts is to reduce the rights of Prosecution Office so that this kind of injustice can be addressed. Korean Prosecution Office’s rights are unusually more than the norm by any standards, and the prosecutors are vehemently resisting a national call to have the rights reduced along the line of other advanced countries, during the Moon Jae-In government (2017–2022).



nor willing to come along with external intervention for change, which is against the newly emergent structural and cultural context of the Korean society. It is a standpattist attitude, which halts the continuing process of Korea's democratic and economic development.

### A Grassroots Movement Against Workplace Bullying: “Workplace Bullying 119”

The seven empirical cases illustrated and briefly analysed above closely entail the three overarching types of bullying, i.e., “work-related, personal, and physical/threatening” (Bartlett and Bartlett 2011: 72), which were discussed earlier. Moreover, the general causes of workplace bullying identified in different societies also apply to workplace bullying in Korea. That is, it is caused by specific individuals, workplaces, and the broader socio-cultural and economic context (Mun et al. 2017). Taking a specific interest in the grassroots movement and perceptions of workplace bullying in contemporary Korea, I contend the workers' increasing reluctance to accept bullying and the related support organizations are crucial in understanding the changing responses to workplace bullying, i.e., the emergent personal properties.

“Workplace Bullying 119” (WB-119, 직장갑질119) is a civic non-profit organization established for the public interest on November 1, 2017. The organization is supported by 241 volunteers, including citizens, Certified Public Labour Attorneys, lawyers, and labour experts. Support and counseling are available through social media, such as dedicated open KaKaoTalk dialogues, Facebook, Blog, and YouTube. Anybody can raise their personal concerns about inappropriate treatment or bullying at the workplace. *NewsTapa*, an investigative media agency, reported the activities of “Workplace Bullying 119” as follows. Within a week of opening the KaKaoTalk-based social media, 1,055 contacted the service to seek advice on their bullying cases. Unlike past unsuccessful efforts for the same purpose, KaKaotalk's easy access and the availability of experts made the non-profit organization successful. WB-119 has paid particular attention to the contract employees with little job security and protection in the small to medium-sized corporations.<sup>33</sup>

Park Jeom-Kyu, a WB-119 staff member, recalled a reason for the founding of the organization was that on a Saturday night *Candlelight Rally* in

33 *NewsTapa*. 2017. “뉴스타파 목격자들—직장갑질119:1부, 5,634명 눈물의 오픈채팅” (*NewsTapa* Eyewitnesses—Workplace Bullying-119: Part 1, 5,634 Carryout Open Chatting with Tears). December 12, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtTmQSLCSY>, accessed October 28, 2020.

December 2016, he saw a large number of workers in their 20s and 30s rushing to the rally, holding candlelights, around 9 pm and 10 pm after finishing their long Saturday working hours. Park was aware that the young workers had a passion to change and to overturn the “wrong” regime, and dreamt of the possibility of improving their workplaces with much better conditions and job security, removing anything inappropriate, including bullying at their workplaces.

From November 1 to November 30, 2017, 5,634 persons joined in the KaKaoTalk chat, and 2,021 bullying cases were reported via chats and emails. The cases included no payment of wages, harassment/mobbing, forced overwork after hours, being fired for no reason. According to 2016 statistics by the Ministry of Employment and Labour, of the corporations employing fewer than 100 workers, only 3.5 per cent of the corporations had workers’ unions. Fifty per cent of the corporations employing fewer than 100 had full-time jobs with “fair” remuneration, and 50 per cent contract jobs with little security. These contexts expose workers to easy dismissal. Prior to engaging in his support for those seeking help through WB-119, Park Jeom-Kyu considered himself knowledgeable about workplace bullying in general. However, Mr. Park was shocked to learn about the inappropriate treatment of workers and bullying in practice, which was well beyond his comprehension. Mr. Oh Jin-Ho, a coordinator at WB-119, noted that one of its achievements is that the communications through KaKaoTalk help the workers realize that they have been bullied without their knowledge because many bullying behaviours have been taken for granted.

There was a case in that a female worker contemplated quitting her job after suffering from long-term verbal and sexual harassment. The company also appropriated her health insurance premium, which left her without any insurance benefit. The worker got in touch with WB-119 to seek professional advice. The worker took up the legal advice and returned to the former employer, raising her complaints. Consequently, the company’s deputy CEO has sincerely apologized, and the worker accepted the apologies and stayed on her job. Park Jeom-Kyu has observed numerous similar cases in that the workers can cope with a financial loss, but are unable to accept workplace bullying, which undermines their human worth.<sup>34</sup> WB-119 wondered why the bullying victims preferred to approach WB-119 to report issues rather than the Ministry of Employment and Labour. According to their survey results, the participants (n: 351) responded as given in Table 8.1 with reference to the Ministry.

34 “뉴스타파 목격자들—직장갑질119:1부, 5,634명 눈물의 오픈채팅.” *NewsTapa*, December 12, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TitTmQSLCsY>, accessed October 28, 2020.

**Table 8.1 Why People Bypass the Ministry of Employment and Labour (A Survey by WB-119)<sup>35</sup>**

Very much helpful	A little helpful	Not much helpful	Not helpful at all	Became more anxious or rather disadvantaged	Made the case worse
n: 36 (10.3%)	n: 43 (12.3%)	n: 133 (38.0%)	n: 66 (18.9%)	n: 70 (20%)	n: 3 (0.6%)

\* Percentile is the figure released in the media. N: 351 and other figures (n) are estimates based on the published figures, 272 participants being equivalent to 77.5 per cent of the participants.

According to WB-119, one of the key problems with the service for the bullying victims provided by the Ministry is that the service does not ensure anonymity. This is a risk for the victims in terms of employment loss when the employer is informed about the reporting. Moreover, 272 participants (or 77.5 per cent, see Table 8.1) found their report to the Ministry of Employment and Labour “not helpful,” indicating that the Ministry seems to have little understanding or interest in the severity and impact of workplace bullying. This may suggest that workplace bullying has been deeply rooted within the structure and culture of the workplaces, and the government organizations have not been proactive enough to address the problem. The prevalent structures conducive to bullying have created the widespread culture of bullying, so that potential instigators and targets took for granted many potentially bullying behaviours, and have only started to recognize these as inappropriate in recent years. Notably, the significance of the emergence of WB-119 is that within a month, 2,021 bullying cases were reported, indicating people are no longer willing to accept the prevalent structure and culture of workplace bullying. They have learned that “when the victims are in solidarity, they can protest against the bullying company.”<sup>36</sup> Thanks to WB-119, the workers within a corporation or the workers engaged in similar professions have established their own social media platforms to provide each other with practical support. Park Jeom-Kyu from WB-119 found that the workers’ staying informed of each other empowers them and provides

35 “뉴스타파 목격자들—직장갑질119:1부, 5,634명 눈물의 오픈채팅.” *NewsTapa*, December 12, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TitTmQSLCsY>, accessed October 28, 2020.”

36 *NewsTapa*. 2017. “뉴스타파 목격자들—직장갑질119: 1부, 5,634명 눈물의 오픈채팅.” December 12, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TitTmQSLCsY>, accessed October 28, 2020.

greater protection against workplace bullying.<sup>37</sup> WB-119 social media effectively made the victims aware of the kinds of employment structure and culture, under which they lived, and allowed them to deliberate on the new structure and culture that they desire. These are the emergent personal properties to stimulate the movement to bring about a new structure, which then leads to new workplace culture. WB-119 clearly facilitated the workers to support each other, thus turning them into social actors for change. Further, their engagement in the process of changing the structure enabled double morphogenesis.

## Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In the post-Fordist and prevalently neo-liberal Korean context, employment stability has notably decreased, which has made employees more cautious of leaving their current employment to seek work elsewhere, regardless of any conflicts they may experience in their workplace; and it makes the workers reluctant to stand against bullying (Jo 2019: 280). Bullying at workplaces in Korea has surfaced in recent years and appears to be quite prevalent. The experts argue that it has been a chronic problem and is deeply embedded in Korean society.<sup>38</sup> From a critical realist viewpoint, bullying is a relatively unchanging phenomenon (i.e., intransitive), and often results from uneven power relationships or economic structure. However, in the context of the emergent cultural properties, people's perceptions and ideas about bullying are open to change, i.e., transitive. This is what ignites the component members of a society to stand against the bullying, whereas they might have more readily accepted it in the past. The social agents' action is limited by the given structural and cultural contexts, but the emergent cultural properties enable and ignite reformative actions to bring about changes to the structure.

Analysis of the empirical cases suggests that there is overlap as to why and how bullying occurs in workplaces in Korea and other countries. From a critical realist viewpoint, there were particular structural and cultural properties that supported the environments conducive for bullying, for example, during the rapid urbanization and industrialization in the 1970s

37 Ibid.

38 *Maeil Kyongje*. 2018. "직장에서도 법대로 합시다...권위주의 갑질 '그만'" (Let's Practise What Is Legal at Workplace As Well ... No More *Gapjil* Based on Authoritarianism)." January 1. <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/society/view/2018/01/422/>, accessed October 17, 2020.

and 1980s. Korea has taken its particular developmental stages in the process of achieving socio-economic development for decades, exploiting the broader international trade buttressed by domestic manufacturing sectors. The logic of exploitative capitalism and some features of Korean traditional cultures (e.g., respecting the older persons) were influential factors shaping human relationships in the workplace. In the context of a growth-oriented economy, gender discrimination, unfair dismissal, exploitation and other types of workplace bullying were apparent (Gu et al. 2015; Kim and Cho 2017; Seo and Yi 2016a). I argue that with the arrival of new information communication technologies (ICTs) there would be added features to workplace bullying, e.g., keeping the employees in easy contact, sending abusive texts. These technologies have also offered channels to address the bullying issue too, allowing people to see the magnitude of the problem and seek help in new ways. However, I offer the following potential elements that may exacerbate and characterize bullying in contemporary Korea. First, Confucian values such as respecting seniors were much more significant until a few decades ago. Such values are not always valued at workplaces anymore, and can cause some degree of grievances and even act as a cause of conflict, leading to workplace bullying. The death of the above-discussed prosecutor is related to this. Younger workers are increasingly standing against those who display workplace bullying behaviours because of their senior age.

Second, Korean men's mandatory service in the Army likely influences and supports the rigid hierarchy in workplaces, including government offices, legal communities, private sectors, and everyday interactions.<sup>39</sup> Third, the Korean culture of commonly observing rigid hierarchy in everyday life takes a role in the hierarchical relations at the workplace (Jo 2019: 278). The sense of hierarchy is so deeply embedded in human relationships that a person's more or less privileged backgrounds (e.g., birth, region, and education) affect her/his life opportunities as well as their relations with colleagues in the workplace. This can operate as a culture of discrimination to aggravate workplace bullying (Han 2016). Similarly, Professor Song Jae-Ryong has noted that Koreans enculturate their thought processes and behaviours under the influence of the hierarchically organized Korean society. He argues that individuals occupy different roles in the organizational units, and this should not be the basis for any discrimination or bullying, which,

39 “직장 내 괴롭힘 금지법 시행 1년, 병원 내 괴롭힘 여전” (One Year After the Legislation of Workplace Anti-Bullying Law, Still Common in the Hospitals). *Cheongnyeon Uisa*, July 16, 2020, <http://www.docdocdoc.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=2000938>, accessed October 20, 2020.

Song argues, is a principle that should be taught and learned in the family unit.<sup>40</sup>

Fourth, I argue that the most influential factor is the neoliberal context that has swept through the Korean economy especially since the IMF's structural management at the time of the 1997 Asian economic crisis. A significant proportion of "regular" jobs have been turned into "irregular and unstable" jobs with lesser remuneration packages, which makes it easier for the employer to dismiss the workforce. Devaluing the workforce is an emergent cultural property and puts all the workers in a vulnerable position. Voluntary redundancies when people are in their fifties are common and many people are working part-time but seeking full-time employment. These emergent structural properties expose a large proportion of workers to vulnerable conditions ripe for workplace bullying. Fifth, Korean society has gone through rapid changes, and different generations have been exposed to different structural and cultural contexts, especially during their youth. Therefore, it is to be expected that there may be generational differences regarding their views on bullying, although this does not necessarily mean that Korean society is steadily moving towards a bullying-free society.

On the surface level, there appear to be relatively limited changes occurring to the structure and culture regarding bullying in the workplace. It goes without saying that structural contexts, such as working conditions for the workers, continue to evolve. However, whether or not the working conditions improve in terms of reducing workplace bullying in the market-driven context is not evident. In this respect, whether the employers or the potential instigators, who generally hold power, are increasingly rejecting the culture of bullying is also not evident. However, there seem to have been apparent changes to the agents' emergent properties. As noted earlier, a significant increase in public concern over workplace bullying since the 2000s is mainly due to people protesting against the bullying and an increase in reporting the incidents, which eventually brought about the legislation of the Workplace Anti-Bullying Law in 2019. This legislation to prevent workplace bullying has been a remarkable achievement. According to a recent survey of 1,183 nurses working in eight different hospitals, undertaken twelve months after the 2019 legislation, 39 per cent responded "the legislation had no impact" and others felt more positive.<sup>41</sup> The survey suggests some changes are taking place

40 *Kuki News*. 2016. "돈이면 다냐? 갑갑한 대한민국, 갑(甲)질 공통점 살펴보니" (Money is Everything? The Bullying Republic of Korea, Common Features of Bullying). April 5, 2016, <http://news.kukinews.com/newsView/kuk201604050260>, accessed October 30, 2020.

41 "직장 내 괴롭힘 금지법 시행 1년, 병원 내 괴롭힘 여전."

thanks to the legislation. A nursing professor Kang Kyeong-Hwa contends that to prevent bullying in the hospital, the hospital owner and managers should have a clear will to address bullying, provide adequate human and material resources, and run the organization appropriately (Jo 2019: 281).<sup>42</sup> The proper operation of the organization includes adequate remuneration for the workers and procedural fairness within the company, leading to job satisfaction (Cropanzano and Greenberg 1997; Lee and Lee 2012; Ryu and Ryu-Kisang 2018). The structure and culture based on credibility, respect, and fairness are much more effective than introducing a particular protocol to prevent bullying (Levering 2000; Pate and Beaumont 2010; cited in Yoo 2015: 251).

New forms of controlling others and bullying continue to arise, which then raises the call for the new rules to prevent bullying (Jo 2019: 288). However, a culture of credibility, respect, and fairness is likely to suppress or reduce bullying effectively in the first place. The structure and culture within the workplace can greatly vary, and the owner and managers of a company can make a difference in building a workplace that is conducive to minimizing bullying. Apart from the above-discussed socio-cultural factors specific to Korean society, the role of ubiquitous media in raising public awareness of workplace bullying cannot be underestimated. All of the empirical cases discussed here have had extensive media coverage in Korea via print and online news reports, radio, TV, YouTube, and blogs.

Both the instigators and targets are component members of Korean society. The instigators are inclined to resort to the prevalent structure and culture, whereas potential targets hope for fair treatment by the dominant group who has control over the present structure and culture (Jo 2019: 282). Potential targets may hope to occupy positions with power and authority so that they can avoid being bullied. Professor Chun Sang-Jin contends that Korean human relationships are based on authoritarian culture, in that senior/superior is distinct from junior/inferior and relationships in general entail close control of the juniors, and commandment, and submission. Chun goes on to argue that people in dominant positions tend to absorb any benefits themselves and pass on responsibilities to the inferior, which encourages in turn the latter to look forward to moving to the dominant positions.<sup>43</sup>

42 “직장 내 괴롭힘 금지법 시행 1년, 병원 내 괴롭힘 여전.”

43 *Maeil Kyongje*. 2018. “직장에서도 법대로 합시다...권위주의 갑질 ‘그만’” (Let’s Practise What is Legal at Workplace as Well ... No More *Gapjil* Based on Authoritarianism). January 1, 2018, <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/society/view/2018/01/422/>, accessed October 17, 2020.

A significant increase in the number of reports of workplace harassment cases may not necessarily indicate an abrupt surge of harassment in recent years, but the victims are not willing to tolerate workplace harassment in the context of emergent structural and cultural properties conducive to the victims' raising voices. The component members, i.e., the workers, desperately need to engage in employment, just as their counterparts in the past. When the workers lose their employment, their opportunity cost is greater than that of the employer (Bowles, Edwards, and Roosevelt 2009: 385; Jo 2019: 280). However, contemporary workers are generally better educated and anticipate that the relationships between the employer and the employee should not be exploitative in the democratic, as well as economically affluent, Korean society. The workers expect better treatment at work and are unwilling to accept mistreatment; they seek professional advice, as illustrated by "Workplace Bullying 119." This is part of the broader trend to stand against any types of unfounded discrimination and misbehaviour (e.g., Kim 2019; Kim 2021: 857; Cho 2016).

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## 9 Concluding Remarks

### Abstract

Contemporary Korea is much represented by individual desires to fulfil their personal aspirations, making the best use of all the available structural and cultural properties. Calculated nationalism, in particular, has become a naturally emergent property, which is more prevalent in the affluent context of Korean democracy and economic development. It is a people's right but has been halted by authoritarian governments as well as the vested interest groups within Korean society. More individual rights should be advocated and supported, so the vested interest groups are encouraged or coerced to share political and economic benefits produced in the society.

**Keywords:** Democracy Index 2020, calculated nationalism, grassroots nationalism, political democratization, economic democratization

Going through a compressed development, South Korea has been at a crossroads at various times every decade since the end of the Korean War (1950–1953). South Korea is known to be one of a very few nations achieving both democracy and economic development since the Second World War (Lee 2018). It was the 10th-strongest economy in the world in 2020. However, the most conspicuous feature of Korean society is that its people are ideologically, politically, and economically divided. It is grassroots Koreans as much as political leaders who all have been striving to bring about a better nation-state for the people of Korea. Korean people's perceptions of their national identities are still in formation. This book is an effort to provide an analytical snapshot at a particular point in time. There is still much to be done for political and economic democratization. South Korea as a nation-state and the people's psyches remain held back as a colonial state domestically and internationally.<sup>1</sup> South Korea has not been able to reconcile with the legacies of its colonial history and the Korean War.

<sup>1</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*. 2019. “미국 학자 ‘일본이 과거사 속죄 않는 것이 세계경제 위협’” (An American Scholar: Japan's Unapologetic Attitude to the Past Mistakes Threatens the World)

Further, political and economic elites have exploited the people they are supposed to serve. Top-down nationalism has lingered, and this has prevented bottom-up nationalism from maturing (Storm 2018: 116). Undoubtedly, Korean elites pursued “fostering solidarity among the members of the nation” to create “a close-knit community” (p. 116), and this has contributed to the coherence of the Korean nation-state. However, top-down nationalism only is not sufficient enough to grow a strong and constructive nationalism. Bottom-up nationalism has occasionally been supported and successful, but in general, has not been fully fostered despite prevalent attempts of grassroots social movements for decades.

An implicit, but important and personal goal of this book project was to look for and analyse the ways in which South Korean people with different ideological and socio-economic backgrounds communicate, which seems to have caused division within the nation over the last one hundred years (Chang 2018: 359). Every nation-state faces its own challenges in supporting the people to stay united, despite their plural characteristics. The challenges of each nation depend upon its unique history and contemporary socio-economic context. South Korea is a relatively newly industrialized nation-state, and its people are ideologically and economically divided. The economic discrepancy between the haves and have-nots and also between the generations is serious. Those with secure jobs and those with insecure and lower-paying jobs, often undertaking the same tasks, divide the workers in the neoliberal context. According to media reports, these lingering problems and the spirit of neoliberalism are reflected in the high suicide rate of young people in particular, and in the internationally popular TV series, *Squid Game*.<sup>2</sup> In contemporary Korea, with these structural and cultural properties, what are the ways in which these socio-economic elements preoccupy the grassroots of South Korea, especially in terms of their perception of South Korea as a nation-state, current national identities, and also their desired future directions of the nation-state?

Economy). August 12, [http://news.khan.co.kr/kh\\_news/khan\\_art\\_view.html?artid=201908121101001&code=970100#csidx86938235b77d2foac271d9c61a89240](http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?artid=201908121101001&code=970100#csidx86938235b77d2foac271d9c61a89240), accessed 12/8/2019; *Ecumenian*. “누가 대한민국을 만들었는가?” 미국의 역사학자가 쓴 미국의 대한민국 만들기의 역사” (Who Shaped the Republic of Korea? A History of Making the Republic of Korea), <http://www.ecumenian.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=9573>, accessed August, 12, 2019.

2 *ABC News*. 2021. “*Squid Game*, the Most Popular Show on Netflix, Was Inspired by South Korea’s Crippling Debt Crisis.” October 16, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-16/squid-game-on-netflix-inspired-by-koreas-debt-crisis/100533282>, accessed October 19, 2021. The popularity of the show reflects the downsides of the neo-liberal world, of which South Korea is a part.

In this book, as a way of understanding bottom-up nationalism, I have gathered news reports and data stored in a range of social media, containing rich information about significant social movements and events. I have selected six influential major events, concerns, and phenomena which have initiated significant social movements at a Korean national level. Analysing media reports and the media representations of the grassroots voices, I have attempted to ascertain the emergent structural and cultural properties which are in operation in the selected concerns and phenomena in Korean society. Further, I have also searched the agents' active responses as ways to ascertain their political and economic rights, which mirror their desired directions for the nation's future. Broadly following the tradition of critical realism and deploying Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach, in particular, I am confident about the value of identifying the structural and cultural contexts of each phenomenon and tracing the individual agents' articulation and reconfiguration of their desired structure and culture.

The victims of the Japanese military "comfort women," discussed in Chapter 3, were women and girls whom imperial Japan forcibly recruited into sexual slavery before and during the Second World War. It is deeply disturbing to hear the victims' descriptions of what they went through for the sake of the relentless Japanese imperial efforts to conquer the world, which involved extremely inhumane and disturbing breaches of human rights. Following the end of the war, many of the "comfort women" were either killed or abandoned on the war fields. Returning to their home nation-state that was too helpless to protect them before and after the war, these victims lived voiceless for half a century. It was South Korea's growing economic power and status in the international community and the emergent cultural properties that encouraged the victims to speak out. They lost so many of their life opportunities, but they wanted to hear formal apologies from the Japanese government as a way to regain their most basic human dignity. A large proportion of young and older Koreans have participated in a range of nationwide movements to help the victims have their dignity recovered. In this process, many Koreans have experienced a transformation from primary agents to corporate agents, and then corporate actors engage in the change of the structures—i.e., double morphogenesis not only within South Korea but beyond. Many victims and Korean activists have understood that the issue of the "comfort women" is not simply a Korean historical incident, but what has happened to many girls and women during wars and conflicts in many parts of the world. Kim Bok-Dong, a victim and activist, has extended the social movement to similar victims elsewhere. Indeed, many victims have demonstrated their extraordinary transformation into



the activists and peacemakers who cared for those who have experienced similar traumatic life experiences. The Korean activists have been leading this human rights movement nationally and internationally. The Statute of Peace has been a symbol of the movement, and a dozen statues have been erected outside South Korea, including in Sydney and Melbourne. South Korean activists are raising their voices against Japan and demanding apologies. As Korean economic power and influence continue to grow, the hope is that Japan may not be able to continue to resist apologizing. If this happens, it will be a significant and remarkable moment in recognition and respect of human rights.

As discussed in Chapter 4, some Korean industries unexpectedly faced the Abe-led Japanese trade provocation, and this incident attracted the attention of the whole nation of Korea. Under the Park Geun-Hye regime, the December 28, 2015 Korea-Japan agreement to settle Japan's critical war crime of sex trafficking for over a quarter-million women angered a large proportion of Koreans. The Moon Jae-In government (2017–2022) took steps to have recovered the dignity of the victims, who were forcibly recruited Korean labourers, during Japanese imperialism. Prime Minister Abe brought this historical matter into international trade and instigated the trade provocation against Korea, i.e., expressing political frustration through trade. This trade provocation suddenly involved Japan, making it a very difficult process for some Japanese companies to supply key chemical products to South Korean companies producing electronic devices. This was an unwise business tactic beyond comprehension in the business world, bluntly breaching business ethics. All the grassroots voluntarily participated in the "No Japan, No Abe" movement in all the possible ways they could.<sup>3</sup> The sluggish trade due to COVID-19 became an added burden that negatively affected Japanese industries.

It was difficult to predict how the boycott was going to unfold. However, Prime Minister Abe was confident in being able to bring the Korean regime and related industries to their knees with apologies, and then the Japanese chemical products could return to sale as usual. The boycott unfolded in unexpected directions from the viewpoints of both South Korea and Japan, in comparison to other boycotts in the past, due to the tensions between the two nations. Since the Independence from Japanese colonialism, Korean presidents have rarely stood against Japanese leaders in relation to political

3 *TheWorld*. 2019. "South Korea's 'No Japan' Boycott Is New. But the Wounds Are Old." August 12, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-08-12/south-korea-s-no-japan-boycott-new-wounds-are-old>, accessed October 14, 2021.

or economic conflicts between the two countries. President Moon Jae-In did on this occasion.

With the support of their government, Korean industries quickly identified new sources to import the required industrial resources, as well as implemented technologies to produce the products in short supply. A huge number of Japanese businesses experienced a significant setback due to the Korean grassroots' boycott of Japanese goods and travel to Japan. An informed economist and commentator noted that the collective masses are much more patriotic and effective than Korean politicians.<sup>4</sup> Towards the end of the trade war between Korea and Japan, Koreans surprisingly and unexpectedly found that their nation-state had improved status and power in the international community. Awkwardly, some pro-Japanese groups of Korean people emphasized the importance of maintaining diplomatic relations with Japan and heavily criticized the Korean government's support of the victims of the forced labour and military "comfort women" who had been seeking the recovery of their fundamental human dignities after having their human rights transgressed. Those Korean standpattists even offered apologies to Prime Minister Abe for the Korean government's "misdeed," which left many ordinary Koreans dumbfounded.<sup>5</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Japanese trade provocation was designed by Prime Minister Abe and his cabinet which had been moving towards the extreme right for decades for the sake of domestic politics, and in looking for the justification for military armament again. The conservative party's prolonged ruling of the Japanese nation-state has shaped its present politics. Korea and Japan are neighbouring countries and must separate the legacy of history from socio-economic and cultural cooperation, which will yield mutual benefit to each other. This is easier said than put into practice due to the complicated history between the two nations. There are many lessons to take from Europe in relation to the victims of the Nazi regime. Japan's lack of any apologies to the victims of forced labour will continue to strain Korea-Japan

4 Kim Hyun-Jeong's News Show. 2019. "日불매 50일, 정치인보다 국민이 낫다는 증거: 건국대 경제학과 최배근 교수" (50 Days of Boycott Japan, the Evidence That the People Are Better Than Politicians). August 23, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-jdmOfH3Wo>, accessed October 20, 2021.

5 *BBC News Korea*. 2019. There was a reliable report that Korean soldiers sexually assaulted hundreds of Vietnamese women during the Vietnam War (1955–1975) and that the offsprings suffered discriminatory treatment. Korean presidents Kim Dae-Jung, Roh Moo-Hyun and Moon Jae-In expressed a regret. 베트남 전쟁: "성폭행범 군복을 봤어요. 한국의 백마부대였죠" (The Vietnam War: I Saw the Rapist's Uniform. It Was a Korean Soldier from the White Horse). January 19, <https://www.bbc.com/korean/news-46896179>, accessed October 18, 2021.

diplomatic relations. I am in search of emergent personal properties amongst the Japanese people, as to date they have demonstrated little concern for human rights. As noted earlier, there are many groups of Japanese people who continue to advocate universal values regarding the military “comfort women” and Japan’s role in the peace of East Asia. Such properties of the Japanese may be largely suppressed under the given structure and culture of Japan, which is unfortunate for the sake of the people of Japan in the first place. Other scholars have delved into these important questions, too.

As discussed in Chapter 5, reunification has been a long-time desire of every South Korean, singing the song, “Our Wish is Reunification” (우리의 소원은 통일). Every Korean had a strong wish for reunification in the first few decades after the Korean War. In those days, the dictatorial leaders demonized the Northern regime and its people for the sake of national security and to legitimize the military government, and the Korean economy was relatively poorer, compared to recent decades. In addition to the many divided families, South Koreans’ ethno-nationalism might have strongly held them together with a sense of the same people sharing the ancestry between North and South Koreans. However, ethno-nationalism has been declining, and individualism has been on the rise in the contexts of economic affluence, improved democracy, and neo-liberalism. Calculated nationalism prevails, and therefore how individuals benefit under the state’s support and protection is particularly important.

My analysis of the news reports on the possibility of reunification indicates that South Korean perceptions are closely related to the cost and benefit of the reunification rather than unquestioningly advocating ethno-nationalism (i.e., sharing the same ancestors with fellow North Koreans). Kang Won-Taek (2011: 26) suggests that this is not only because of the long time that has brought about different cultures in the North and South, but more because South Koreans are much more proud of South Korea’s advanced political governance, which has improved their sense of belonging, loyalty, and togetherness. In the midst of the sweeping neo-liberal economic context, most young people are preoccupied with an extreme form of calculated nationalism and have become indifferent to the need for reunification. The younger generation would like to see tangible benefits out of the reunification if it were to happen. Some older generations still feel closely affiliated with ethno-nationalism and would like to see reunification occur in the foreseeable future.

Nonetheless, cost-benefit nationalism or calculated nationalism is a fundamentally new form of nationalism now held by many. It is probably fair to say that structural properties have always been the backbone of Korean

nationalism with reference to reunification. There is so much to gain from reunification economically, then leading to emergent cultural properties that all the Koreans can enjoy and appreciate, which enrich the quality of the life of the component members of the whole Korean peninsula.

The analysis in Chapter 7 of national flag-carriers confirms Seo Joong-Seok's (2004) argument that Korean extreme right-wingers are pro-Japanese (*Chinilpa*), and they pursue anti-nationalism and anti-North Korea. They are toadies and heavily rely on the power of the USA and Japan. This is the reason that the flag-carriers, who are extreme right-wingers, carry the flags of the USA and Japan. This was also apparent in 2019 when the Liberty Korea Party (now People Power Party) prioritized American and Japanese national interests over Korean interests in regard to the three-way defense treaty, i.e., GSOMIA (the General Security of Military Information Agreement). The problem arose as Japanese Prime Minister Abe removed Korea from the Japanese whitelist to receive fair treatment when Korea imports particular products such as electronic devices. The Korean government lost confidence in Japan and warned Japan that GSOMIA might not be renewed. Despite Korea's little gain from GSOMIA, the members of the Liberty Korea Party and extreme right-wingers campaigned against the Moon government's decision and spoke clearly for the interests of Japan. This is the reason why the Liberty Korea Party was called *Tochak Waegu-dang* (토착왜구당), literally meaning Japanese Party indigenized in Korea.

The chapter illustrates the legacy of the vested interest groups which might have originated from the Japanese colonial period or professional elite groups, or specific religious groups. At times, groups such as these or other interest groups incorporate into each other in order to preserve their economic advantages or cultural elitism, which are generally closely intertwined. Some Korean regimes under strongly determined leaders have vigorously pursued a range of large-scale reformations to overcome many of the longstanding social evils, including corruption, improve the quality of life for all, and seek ways for everyone to co-prosper. This is a struggle against the vested interest groups who continue to renew the structural properties that are operated with different features at different times, but for their benefit. Diverse interest groups who enjoy profiting from the social evils or pitfalls of the prevalent structural properties continue to resist any changes to disturb their secure profits. Some individual agents may pursue their structural benefits blindly, and others may be guided by their self-centred cultural properties. When they ignore the common good for the sake of personal interest, they hinder the process of progress towards building a community of transparency, mutual respect, and support. The

result is regress rather than progress. Then the dilemma is the question of who has the right to determine what progress is and how it will be pursued. Or is there such a thing as the common good? I have my own answers, but others have the right to disagree with me. These are the simple but important questions that need to continue to be debated freely in the Korean community. This is about free-flowing communication, for which the role of the press is crucial here. Ensuring such debates take place publicly should be a certain and essential function of democracy (Dobson 2014). Unfortunately, the traditional news media in Korea is highly distrusted.<sup>6</sup>

In Chapter 8, I have discussed several cases of workplace bullying, characterized by inhumane relationships that are observed in many sectors of Korean society, i.e., the employer-employee relations in the Army, in the airplane, in the apartment, in the department store, and in the Prosecution Service. Korean society has rapidly urbanized and industrialized since the 1960s, along with The Five-Year Economic and Social Development Plans, the first of which commenced in 1962 and continued till 1996 with the completion of the seventh. A significant proportion of the rural population left their farming behind and shifted to urban areas. Adjusting to urban life and looking for their livelihood, the migrants or urban poor became the sources of labour for the export-oriented economic development, in the 1970s and 1980s. There was little room for the workers' rights in the factories. Workers' rights guaranteed in the constitution are one thing, but in practice completely another. Workplace environments were heavily favourable towards employers, and the severe exploitation of the workers was common (e.g., see Cho 1983).

Workers' movements to seek their rights and economic democratization over a few decades have been efforts to accomplish structural and cultural elaboration. Despite the continuing development of the national economy and GDP per capita, workplace bullying has improved little. It went from bad to worse, especially since the IMF's intervention through structural adjustment programmes due to the Asian economic crisis in 1997 and the neo-liberal economic environment advocated by the conservative regimes of the presidents Lee Byung-Bak and Park Geun-Hye. However, with the continuing improvement of the international status of the national economy, the public has been seeking their own share out of the economic prosperity (cf., Park 2021). That is, these are the emergent cultural properties, which then further stimulate the individual agents to mobilize their emergent personal properties (Archer 2007). Standing against workplace bullying or

6 *Hankyoreh*. 2021. "How S. Korean Media Can Regain Trust." April 18, accessed April 15, 2022.

unfair treatment of the workers is slowly settling as a new cultural trend that is likely to continue. The coming of “Workplace Bullying 119” represents the frustration and desire of the grassroots, especially in the era of ubiquitous media.

## Main Findings

Many social movements in contemporary Korea are about catching up with and levelling up political and economic democratization, which directly or indirectly affects the life quality of ordinary people in particular. These movements have been in operation ever since the start of industrialization and urbanization, which were mobilized by the economic development plan under Park Chung-Hee’s dictatorial leadership. Park’s commitment to the national development planning was to bring up the living standards, which, on the other, could “naturally” help legitimize his own leadership (Han and Sharp 1997). His export-oriented economic development has largely been successful in the favourable context of international trade in the 1970s and 1980s (Lie 1998). However, the development was heavily focused on growth, and the workers’ remuneration and welfare were severely compromised. The continuing gap between the haves and have-nots has long been a concern to the latter. An increasingly growing proportion of young people with limited prospects for their future life opportunities and their parents of the “industrialization generation” are frustrated. In this context, the well-educated Korean workforce is well aware of their impoverishment largely resulting from the lack of proper economic and welfare policies, lack of political will, and economic inequalities prevalent in the industries and wage systems. These are some of the ongoing topics at the time of all local and national elections, but the urgency of the matters fades as each election is over. According to Cho Kuk (2022), South Korea’s achievement of the status of an advanced nation-state has been brought in advance at the cost of these shortcomings, which continue to be ignored.

According to the *Democracy Index 2020* report, South Korea was ranked the 20th most democratic country globally—ranking it the 16th in the 2021 report.<sup>7</sup> However, like any other democracy, there is much room to improve, especially the operation of the National Assembly in regard to legislating the policies in every sector for the sake of improving the quality

7 <https://www.democracymatrix.com/ranking> & <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/democracy-index-2021-1644567197-1>, accessed May 3, 2022.

of life. The difficulty is in part due to the conservative nature of political parties as well as the majority of Korean people. As a relatively young democratic nation-state, South Korea has conservative and progressive political parties whose polities are significantly different from most other democratic parties in the West. Korean conservative party (i.e., People Power Party in 2022) tends to be standpattist, and the Korean progressive party (i.e., Democratic Party of Korea in 2022) is conservative enough compared to Western democracy. It is the public understanding as often publicized in the public media in Korea that some members of the Democratic Party of Korea are also extremely conservative in terms of their political ideology. In this context, it is difficult to introduce or reform the legislation targeted to improve the life quality of the lower-middle or disadvantaged populations.

As discussed in the earlier chapters, the legacies of Japanese colonialism and the Korean War have impacted Korean politics. Many pro-Japanese Koreans (친일파) and their descendants are enjoying significant wealth. And the standpattist politicians and conservative Christians have targeted progressive reform bills and progressive politicians in the name of “commies” (빨갱이). To make this worse in the last couple of decades, the Korean Prosecution Service, which is supposed to be politically neutral, has been working in cooperation with some members of the National Assembly, especially those who worked in the prosecution office in the past. Under the military regimes, the government and the National Intelligence Service (NIS) worked closely, and the former granted the latter a plenipotentiary administrative power to carry out the duties. This was possible especially because the Korean peninsula has technically been at war, and the NIS has engaged in criminalizing many civilians for the sake of legitimizing the military and conservative regimes. The NIS has been in the process of reconfiguring its key roles in recent decades, during which the Prosecution Service has grown to be an influential group serving its own needs in cooperation with conservative leaders and bureaucrats in diverse sectors of Korean society. As part of these corrupt groups, some standpattists have been the beneficiaries of the nation’s misfortunes, such as Japanese colonialism and the Korean War.

As has frequently been reported in the Korean media, some prosecutors have been convicted of engaging in prosecutorial misconduct, and a good number of prosecution officers have been in support of these illegal activities. The majority of prosecutors, standpattists or conservative electorates, or parliamentarians have nothing to do with these illegal conducts or the legacy of Japanese colonialism. Yet, there are numerous pro-Japanese collaborators

and their descendants, some of whom actively pursued their personal gains at the cost of fellow Koreans during the colonial period, and others did rather “naively” for the sake of survival. The national effort to liquidate pro-Japanese traitors commenced, following the National Independence in 1945, but has not been successful; this failure has been highly negative for the political and economic democratization of South Korea (Kang 1993; Yi 2004). Those conservative Christians who fled from North Korea’s persecution of Christians have been absorbed and incorporated into the military and conservative politics. They believe the progressive regime is at the forefront of efforts to communize South Korea. Their experience of religious prosecution has turned them against progressive politics because progressives are willing to have a dialogue with the North Korean regime. These are the legacies of history, and they are halting the continuing efforts for the democratic and political emancipation of the broader Korean population.

Component members of any society display a hugely different range of ultimate goals (Archer 2007). Individual agents may go through constant tension and conflict in their life as they strive to be selective among their different goals and make the best out of their life chances. There are also a group of people who will take advantage of the political and economic difficulties of the nation at particular times. Others may pursue the status quo of the given socio-economic context for their benefit, which then delays the required reformations and political and economic democratization. These have been vividly demonstrated in Korean society for the last several decades of the unprecedented rapid changes in every sector of Korean society.

Reflecting the ideological division within the National Assembly, Korean electorates are broadly divided into conservatives and progressives. However, I have to note that whether parliamentarians or electorates, there is a broad range of political ideologies, and they cannot be easily categorized into a few as the researchers may like to see. I have selected the chapters’ topics, with which a significant proportion of South Korean grassroots have long been greatly concerned. However, theoretical approaches to and interpretations of the analysed data may not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the significant majority of Koreans, but largely those of the progressives. I may also be biased towards the progressives. It was my deliberate effort to include and analyse the national flag carriers’ social movements. So that one of the notable conservative groups can be introduced to the readers. Flag carriers are not a homogeneous group of people with a clear set of political ideologies and commitments. The core members of flag carriers consist of the supporters of Our Republican Party (우리공화당), of which one of



their commitments was to free the imprisoned president Park Geun-Hye.<sup>8</sup> However, when the flag carriers held the rallies, they attracted thousands of supporters of the major opposition and conservative party, the People Power Party. Thus, they worked in solidarity to fight against the Democratic Party of Korea. As indicated in the chapters about the protests by flag carriers and candlelight holders, I found it difficult to make a completely objective analysis. Nonetheless, other scholars argue that the candlelight holders' protests were culturally rich in their repertoires, whereas those of flag carriers were culturally poor, rigid, and past-oriented (Yi 2017: 47). These are the reflection of the goals of these different protesting groups, and the latter group is nostalgic and outdated in their cultural and ideological commitments.

During and after the Independence of Korea from Japanese imperialism, there have been ongoing efforts to bring back national freedom, justice, and peace to the nation-state and its people's life (Baker 2019). However, those who have advocated such values have been sidelined for decades (Kim 2016: 7). Instead, those who were anti-nation, such as the pro-Japanese traitors during the Japanese colonialism, have stubbornly sustained their vested-interest positions as the nation's elites. The *Candlelight Revolution* was a campaign against such groups, the accumulated socio-historical evils, and their mal-practices, which lingered for many decades. The 2016 *Candlelight* rallies in the winter were people's direct expression of their outcries against President Park Geun-Hye's influence-peddling, which characterized the elites' misappropriation of power and profiteering at the expense of the people that the elites are supposed to serve. The *Candlelight Revolution* replaced the conservative president with a progressive one in the hope that the lives of ordinary people would start to improve rapidly. There was another presidential election on March 9, 2022, and a good portion of progressive electorates was disenchanted with the loss to the conservative president-elect. Further democratic and economic democratization will be halted or slow in the next five years, which has been evidenced by what the president-elect and the Presidential Transition Committee have pursued during the eight weeks after the election. The progressive grassroots realize that a notable change in the quality of their lives may still be far away (Kim 2016: 11).

Jung Kwan-Yong, a long-time observer and informed journalist, argues that Koreans advocating ideologically different political parties are deeply divided and reluctant to listen to each other (Jung 2009; Dobson 2014). As

8 President Moon released her in December 2021 after giving her a special pardon.

Jung argues, this culture of “no listening” has to change. Being prepared to listen to each other will be a starting point in overcoming the complicated structural and cultural emergent properties. These complicated economic and cultural properties, due to the tangled problems surrounding the legacy of Japanese imperialism and the divided peninsula, are likely to prevail for some time. Nonetheless, as the *Democracy Index 2020* and *2021* suggest, South Korea is becoming more democratic, and ordinary people, such as employees and other disadvantaged people, are able to speak about their concerns and grievances much more openly than in the past. These are not small changes, but a notable improvement to establish good communication in the community. As discussed in the chapters, the potential of grassroots nationalism is that it will continue to promote high values such as liberty, equity, justice, peace, and fraternity, which will then contribute to building a better civil society in Korea and beyond.

This book has investigated the Korean grassroots’ perception of contemporary South Korea as a nation-state, how it is overcoming some legacies of history, such as the desire for the reunification of the Korean peninsula, the Japanese military “comfort women,” and other concerns that have been influential to the life quality of Korean people. Undertaking the project between 2018 and 2022, Korean society has been under the progressive regime, which has been prioritizing the elimination of “accumulated bad conventions” and also the reform of the Prosecution Service to ensure it observes human rights in its undertaking its activities and remains neutral to politics. In brief, South Korea’s Prosecution Service’s monopoly on both investigation and prosecution (indictment) is outdated. This makes the prosecution process unjust and exposed to corruption, as illustrated by its intervention in presidential and general elections. These goals are partly achieved towards the end of the Moon Jae-In government in May 2022, but still in progress rather than complete. As noted above, these reforms could be halted under the conservative government to be led by the prosecutor-turned-president, Yoon Suk-Yeol.

South Korea has made remarkable progress with economic development, dialogue with North Korea for a peaceful Korean peninsula, international relations, its COVID-19 response, and an increasing reputation of Korean cultural products and industries, such as the music artists BTS (방탄소년단) and the Academy Award-winning film *Parasite*, and President Moon Jae-In’s diplomatic achievements, such as being invited to the 2021 G7 Summit in the UK. Indeed, there have been numerous occasions to support the elevated national pride of Koreans. However, all the conservative news outlets of online news, radio, and television have either minimally reported

the achievements or even negatively reported the national achievements, essentially distorting the news and consequently blinding and deafening the audiences. Those in the conservative camp, such as flag-carriers, would see these matters completely differently. Nonetheless, the following are some of the newly observed phenomena discussed in some of the progressive media outlets.

There are continuing and persistent changes occurring to the structure and culture of the Korean society and Korea's power and influence in the international community, which have accompanied the agents' increasingly positive perception of the Korean nation-state domestically and internationally (cf., Kang 2011). This has been apparent during the whole period of this book-writing project which coincided with the outbreak of COVID-19. South Korea seems to be in a clear transition to a fully-fledged developed country, as evidenced by the international media attention to how the Korean government and medical sector methodically dealt with COVID-19 without closing the national border.<sup>9</sup> International media outlets first reported positively about the advanced and professional practices, and then a few limited Korean media outlets reproduced them, which took Koreans by surprise. This is because Koreans have lived with an inferiority complex, or the mediocre syndrome, despite South Korea's international reputation in many areas that the Korean nation-state had been achieving even before the Moon Jae-In regime. That is, they knew South Korea was rapidly developing economically, politically, and culturally, but they were rarely ranked as one of the top-performing nations. South Koreans have admired Japan, the US, Canada, Australia, and Northern European countries as model countries to emulate. However, Koreans have been well informed of those countries' struggles to fight COVID-19. For example, a large number of COVID-19 patients have not been able to receive adequate medical care in the US and Japan. Koreans will continue to maintain their admiration of the advanced democratic countries with high living standards and well-established welfare policies; however, they are becoming increasingly aware of the limited and biased domestic media reporting about their nation's elevated status, which is better known, in the international community. I think this is likely to have an apparent influence on Korean people's perception of their nation-state and consequently the national identity of the present and future, i.e., grassroots nationalism.

9 *The Guardian*. 2020. "South Korea: From Early COVID Success to Fears Over Ferocious Spread of Virus." *The Guardian*, December 15, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/15/south-korea-how-early-covid-competence-gave-way-to-a-second-wave>, accessed October 16, 2021.

Of the many social phenomena, I have difficulty understanding Japan's recalcitrant refusal to offer sincere apologies to the victims of the forced labour, including the Japanese military "comfort women." Instead of offering apologies, Japan dared to instigate the awkward trade provocation against Korea and its electronic corporations. The provocation was completely against history and humanities. Unless serious human rights crimes are redressed, similar problems are likely to be repeated. There are a good number of Japanese civilians demanding the Japanese government undertake the steps to redress past mistakes. However, their cries have fallen on deaf ears. Again, many Koreans have difficulty understanding other fellow Koreans and standpattist politicians blindly advocating for the Japanese government led by prime ministers like Abe Shinzo, Yoshihide Suga, and Kishida Fumio, who might only cultivate further crimes against humanity in the future and exacerbate the animosities between the two nations.

Calculated nationalism is not a term opposite to ethno-nationalism. As discussed in relation to the prospect of the reunification of the Korean peninsula, previously, most South Koreans embraced ethno-nationalism. And it was sufficient for the southern state to pursue reunification with the northern state in the 1970s and 1980s when there was a relatively less economic discrepancy between them. It was especially those South Korean populations who were from lower socio-economic status and who had less to lose from a possible reunification compared to those Koreans who were much better off. In this respect, both calculated nationalism and ethno-nationalism might have been prevalent among people from different socio-economic backgrounds in the 1970s and 1980s. However, ethno-nationalism seemed considered socially desirable somewhat more than calculated nationalism in those times. In a similar vein, a *Gemeinschaft* is a prevalent form of a community in fishing and farming communities. This does not mean everyone in those communities is strictly oriented towards *Gemeinschaft* rather than *Gesellschaft*. It is the structural properties of a community, which then produce the affinitive cultural properties, in which individual agents continue to either reproduce or transform the community, depending upon the external elements to which the community is exposed, and their individual agents' consequent reactions.

Calculated nationalism seems a natural and apparent feature in the development of nationalism at this point in time in South Korea. It may not be appropriate to attach any moral judgment to it. After all, it is fair to acknowledge the continuing toils of the workers with a huge range of skills, and it is appropriate to return and distribute the nation's wealth back to the workers rather than have it concentrated on the relatively

privileged. Moreover, the workers have the right to ask for their share of the wealth, just as Rhyu Si-Min (2021) argues that contemporary Korean history is represented by the Korean citizens' ongoing pursuit of their own cravings. However, the best form of calculated nationalism should not be about individual agents seeking their personal gains only, but that they collectively strive towards incorporating the common good into their individual pursuits or vice versa. These collective efforts will provide feedback on the continuing reformation of the structural and cultural properties of the community.

### Theoretical Implications

A refreshed discussion of globalization around the turn of the 21st century predicted that nationalism would gradually lose its grip. For Ulrich Beck (2006), globalization provided the context to advance individualism, consumerism, and cosmopolitanism. Zygmunt Bauman (2002: 84) noted that neo-liberalism promotes individuals as individualistic consumers rather than citizens of particular nation-states (cf., Malešević 2018: 553). Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002: 301) rightly observe that it has been made obvious that "nation-states and nationalism are compatible with globalization ... We witnessed the flourishing of nationalism and the restructuring of a whole range of new states in Eastern Europe along national lines in the midst of growing global interconnections." An analysis of grassroots nationalism in Korea implies that the relationship between globalization, individualism, and nationalism is not as straightforward as one would have anticipated. The case of Korean nationalism illustrates that individualism has strengthened, and the sense of national identity of a distinct nation-state has also increased.

Moreover, new forms of nationalism have emerged, and "calculated nationalism" in Korea is one. Its properties seem to encompass both individualism as well as nationalism, of which the nature of the latter is collective (Cichocka and Cislak 2020). In the intensively nationalistic context, people of a modern nation-state continue to advocate nationalism as it is characterized by, and serves, a need for international recognition. This is a reason the people of a nation hang on to nationalism, but they cautiously calculate the possible benefit of what their nation-state or nationalism can offer them at an individual level domestically and internationally.

Many sectors in Korean society and individuals often experience tension resulting from potential consequences of morphostasis and morphogenesis

(Edwards and Brehm 2015: 287), that is, change or not to change; adopt new principles of action, or seek the status quo. In the *Candlelight* rallies, there was largely one group of agents or social actors. They were all attempting to change the given structure and culture to bring about a fairer community and to lead to human emancipation as much as possible. In the flag carrier's rallies, the agents attempted to hold on to the prevalent structure and culture, which included many socially undesirable evils, corruption, and privileges for vested interest groups. In the incidents of workplace bullying, the instigators hold on to the given structure and culture, whereas the potential targets with less power and authority want the best treatment by the vested interest group, who have better control over structure, culture, and agency. Or potential targets hope to eventually hold positions with more power and authority so that they are better able to avoid being bullied.

### **Empirical Implications**

The nation is divided and how to bring them together is an important political and economic task in contemporary Korea. Political and economic democratization is one way to start achieving this effectively. Learning and embracing the differences will be a key task to accompany, and also learn to accept the “common recognition of a set of ethical-political values” (Jacka 2003: 183). I think this is part of cultural properties which individual agents can cultivate out of the given structural properties. As Archer notes, structural and cultural changes are mutually reinforcing (1995: 323). For example, in this process, individual agents' social interaction enables structural elaboration, i.e., the structure is modified. Similarly, individual agents' socio-cultural interaction enables cultural elaboration, i.e., the culture is modified. Undoubtedly, this is generally a slow process. Still, it is worth remembering that all social actions are characterized by “probable fallibility” (Archer 2007; Wimalasena 2017: 399), that is, some aspects of social movements will lead to success and others not be achieved.

In contemporary Korea, there is a strong focus on individuals seeking their personal aspirations and desires, and making the best use of all the available structural and cultural properties to do so (Rhyu 2021). Through this, calculated nationalism has become a naturally emergent property, which is more prevalent in the affluent contemporary context of Korean democracy and economic development. It is a people's right, but it has been halted by authoritarian governments as well as the vested interest groups

within Korean society. More individual rights should be advocated and supported; thus, vested interest groups can become encouraged or coerced to share the political and economic benefits produced in the society.

The bulk of the contents in this book is about the people's emergent properties (PEPs) of ordinary Koreans around the time of the *2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution*, which is a continuation of the *April 19 Revolution* in 1960 and the *1987 June Struggle* to pave the road for economic and political democratization. The *Candlelight Revolution* is not over, and we do not know how long the revolution will continue. During the dictatorial periods by Park Chung-Hee, Chun Doo-Hwan, and Roh Tae-Woo, a large portion of Koreans seemed to have remained primary agents with passivity to the need to reform the society rather than corporate agents to pursue the reform. Importantly, during those periods, structural and cultural emergent properties were not fertile enough for the bulk of the population to exert power to change. Or, structural and cultural conditioning was not ready to absorb the people's desire for structural and cultural elaboration.

To put it differently, the economy and culture were such that the bulk of the Korean population could not afford to engage in the social change and that they continued to restrain their active agency. Since the 1988 Seoul Olympics, an increasing number of Koreans have readily transformed themselves from primary agents to corporate agents and eventually to corporate actors, coupled with calculated nationalism. The successful economic growth and the ubiquitous media have been influential factors in these processes. The process of improving democracy, economic democratization, and human rights improvement is ongoing, as Koreans lead their lives and develop a sense of the need for improvements and exert their agency to the specific situation for a change.

### **Korea as a Developed Nation?**

South Korea gained OECD membership in 1996. Since then, South Korea has continued to develop politically and economically. Its power and influence have also grown significantly in the international community. Nonetheless, there has been an ongoing debate about Korea's fully-fledged membership of the OECD, in terms of what Korea is capable of, especially with reference to the welfare of its significant proportion of the lower-middle demographics of the nation. In addition, CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) migrants and other minorities face many difficulties in accessing fair life opportunities. South Korea has also accepted a relatively smaller number

of refugees than it is expected to.<sup>10</sup> The legislation of anti-discrimination law is yet to be accomplished. A nightmare that is likely to haunt the whole nation is its low birth rate, reflecting the highly challenging socio-economic conditions. These are indeed discouraging elements.

Conversely, there is an equally strong argument that South Korea has, in many ways, already achieved a more advanced democracy and socio-economic prominence, compared to other developed countries, such as Japan and the United States. This was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, in how the South Korean medical system cared for the infected populations and sustained the whole nation without closing the nation's border. Korea was often referred to as one of the best exemplars in the fight against COVID-19.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, there is no fully-fledged developed country without room for further improvement. In recent years, a good number of popular media personnel and broadcasters have advocated the idea that South Korea has now reached its highest achievement in terms of the standards expected of the developed countries. For example, in early July 2021, UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) categorized South Korea as part of Group B, and this means Group A supported South Korea to better represent the needs of Group A, and Group B realized the need to work together with South Korea. This change in Korea's status would not have occurred without its economic and international trade achievements. Park Tae-Woong illustrates South Korea's achievement in his book, *눈 떠보니 선진국* (*Awoke in a Developed Country*, 2021). Park argues that South Korea is an exemplary model itself, and it does not need to look for a model to emulate anymore.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, foreign reporters seem increasingly prepared to recognize South Korea as an advanced and sophisticated democratic nation-state.<sup>13</sup> However, Park Tae-Woong points out that South Korea is a developed country "already, but not yet." South Korea has achieved a condensed development, and in that process, there are many by-products, which need to be redressed.

10 Reuters. 2020. "South Korea Takes in 164 Asylum Seekers from Nearly 6,000 Applicants." *Reuters*, November 2. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-southkorea-refugee-idUSKBN271oAA>, accessed August 22, 2021.

11 Bloomberg. 2021. "The COVID Resilience Ranking: The Best and Worst Places to Be as Winter Meets Omicron." November 30, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/covid-resilience-ranking/>, accessed December 13, 2021.

12 TBS FM/TBS TV Kim Ur-Joon's News Factory. 2021. "'눈떠보니 선진국,' 한빛미디어 의장 박태웅" (*Awoke in a Developed Country*, Hanbit Media Chair, Park Tae-Woong). January 20, 2021.

13 KTV People's Broadcasting. 2020. "우리나라를 오랫동안 취재했던 3명의 외신기자들이 보는 대한민국은?" June 1, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lbmn-8amj8w>, accessed October 20, 2021.



## Particularity and Universality of the Project

This book project has primarily focused on political and economic democratization in South Korea from the viewpoints of the progressive grassroots. However, the key ideas and values that I have in mind are universal such as liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice. There is no point in denying that these values are relative. However, this is not the space to dwell on relativity. At the time of writing, the world is full of human suffering such as child labour, no primary education for children, human rights breaches, nations under extreme dictatorship, religious extremism, the Russo-Ukrainian War (2022), and climate change. Unfortunately, the world has become highly indifferent to fellow humans suffering from these troubles and misfortunes.

Finally, I reiterate that political and economic democratization is a process. South Korea has made significant achievements on these for the last half a century. However, the substantial inequalities between the haves and have-nots, and between the more and less educated, and between the regions remain. The level of inequality is far more than acceptable, and it keeps increasing every year. The grassroots have worked diligently but have not been able to enjoy the full benefits of their labour. This is because democracy is not working properly, i.e., the lack of appropriate political democratization. Democracy under high economic inequality is of limited value for the people of a nation-state. Individual self-indulgence in a highly unequal society will make it go from bad to worse (George 1932). We do not expect the perfect days will ever arrive; however, we would like to think we are making good progress towards the days. The grassroots would like to live in a nation-state where common sense prevails in terms of what they receive for their labour, where wealth is shared more fairly, and where there is a much fairer legal system for every accused. They want to live free of the threat of possible aggression from North Korea. There are still too many people who are unable to receive appropriate remuneration for their labour and who are fatigued with the unfair treatments that they experience in their everyday life. Far too many people still die at work. There is also a range of minorities who are discriminated against for their identities.<sup>14</sup> It is time to understand and consider seriously implementing numerous guides and lessons, for the South Korean people, such as Roh Moo-Hyun's *Future of the*

14 *MBC News Desk*. 2020. “동물 취급하고 때리고...한국 선원은 악마였다” (Treated as Animal and Bashed Up ... Korean Sailors Were Demons). June 8, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNnbDx1731Q>, accessed October 20, 2021.

*Progressives* (Roh 2019) and Jeremy Rifkin's *The European Dream* (Rifkin 2004; also see Kim 2009).

I have argued for the emergent form of nationalism throughout—calculated nationalism. It is important to recognize that it is not that there was no, or little degree, of calculated nationalism in the past. Grassroots must have always had a significant degree of calculated nationalism in their everyday life, and it is only absurd to deny that. The Korean grassroots love to see their nation-state prosper, as well as seek personally satisfying lives; these are simple desires, but they have been difficult to fulfil. What is at stake is that in the past, despite a relatively high degree of calculated and personal nationalism, grassroots or ordinary people had significant room to care for collectivism and the collective national identity of the imagined community of Korea. That is, the extent to which calculated and personal nationalism becomes much more dominant than collective nationalism reflects the prevalent structural and cultural properties of society. The issue is not about whether one form of nationalism is better than the other. *Gemeinschaft* is no better than *Gesellschaft*, but they are different, and each comes with its own structural and cultural properties in terms of how each impacts the lives of its component members and their perception of national identities.

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## Epilogue

This book project coincided with the five-year tenure of the Moon Jae-In government (2017–2022), which was inaugurated following the *2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution*. That incident raised the Korean grassroots' concerns over Park Geun-Hye's influence peddling and long-accumulated corruption among the elites, which had curtailed the life chances of ordinary Koreans for decades. I have selected six topics that I considered crucial to political and economic democratization for the Korean people. The *2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution* was in part an effort to address political and economic democratization, the goals of which are shared with the *1968 Revolution* in France. I note in the book that social movements could not blossom in South Korea under its authoritarian regimes. The Moon Jae-In government and the Democratic Party of Korea attempted to facilitate socio-political movements through the legislation of various policies to reform the press, Prosecution Service, and housing plans. The Moon regime's outcomes fell far too short of the grassroots' expectations, which led to the loss of the 2022 Presidential election to the conservative party. The loss in part implies that it is a return of vested interest groups which in modern Korean history have represented the tightly organized cartel of the press, elite groups, and the business sectors rather than pursuing justice, fraternity, equity, and meeting the needs of the impoverished members of the community. It is of great concern that the Korean legacy media, in particular, has long forgotten its responsibility as the fourth estate. Indeed, it is the most outdated and the worst performing institution in contemporary South Korea and requires reform urgently. Unless this is addressed soon, the future of democracy and the economy of South Korea is under threat.

I anticipate that the Yoon Suk-Yeol government will continue to respect grassroots nationalism as it relates to the public's perception of nationalism, national identities, and the grassroots' desire for the future direction of the Korean nation-state. However, how the Yoon government will handle South Korea's relations with the North Korean regime and diplomatic relations with Japan remains to be seen. During and soon after the election campaign, Yoon has never provided the Korean public with confidence that he will do a good job. He won the election by 0.73 percentage points or 247,077 votes. Yoon's victory was found to be primarily based on people's desire to sustain their wealth of real estate, especially in metropolitan Seoul. Moreover, young men resented the rise of women in the workplace, which challenged their traditional privileged position. Yoon's conservative party

engaged in gender politics for their political gain, dividing the nation rather than uniting them. These represent some destructive and extreme forms of calculated nationalism.

The 2022 presidential election was no different from other elections in Korea and in other democratic countries in the sense that the candidates offered future directions for political and economic policies that influence the prosperity of the nation-state and individual well-being. Nonetheless, I thought that the Moon government's failure to address the high price and shortage of housing was a central matter with which the grassroots were dissatisfied. Thus, the voters asked themselves, "What has the government done for me?" Again, this question reflects calculated nationalism in the mind of ordinary people. Presidential candidates understood this well. The election catchphrase chosen for the candidate of the Democratic Party of Korea, Lee Jae-Myung, was "나를 위해 이재명" (Lee Jae-Myung for my own sake). President-elect Yoon Suk-Yeol of the People Power Party exploited the Moon regime's alleged shortcomings and argued for a regime change for the sake of the grassroots' well-being, better housing policies, and compensation for the financial losses resulting from COVID-19. These election commitments typically reflect the people's calculated nationalism.

Considering the track record of Yoon's party, the People Power Party, the newly elected government may not be the greatest facilitator, but neither will it necessarily be able to halt the nation's political and economic democratization significantly. While the 2016–2017 *Candlelight Revolution* could be forced into a slow progress mode, it will continue, and no future regime will be able to stop its progress completely. It is hoped that Korean democracy is mature enough and the grassroots are sufficiently determined to guard their democracy and economic democratization. Time will tell. May the spirit of the *Candlelight* continue to burn for the sake of human rights, dignity, hope, fraternity, and the co-prosperity of all Koreans!

# Index

- “comfort station” 19, 71, 73, 77, 83, 91–92, 94–95, 100, 103, 106  
*1968 Revolution in France*, the 15, 21, 301  
1997 economic crisis, the 41  
1997 IMF Intervention, the 39  
2008 Candlelight vigil, the 45  
2008 global financial crisis 249–250  
2011 East Japan earthquake 140  
2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution, the 11, 15, 17, 18, 20–21, 28, 45–47, 58, 64, 66, 108, 187, 189, 191–193, 195, 197, 199, 201, 203, 205, 207–209, 211, 213–214, 194, 301–302  
2018 Asian Game, the 45  
2018 Kim-Trump Summit, the 175  
2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, the 45, 156, 177
- abduction 85, 122  
Abe Shinzo 19, 115, 126, 134, 146, 213, 291  
active citizenry 208  
actors 15, 18, 20, 22, 25, 27, 31–32, 35, 49–53, 55–56, 58–59, 61–62, 80–81, 83–84, 86–91, 93, 96–97, 99–105, 107–108, 117–119, 126, 148, 153, 163, 187, 190–192, 196, 200, 208, 219–220, 238, 241, 243, 249, 251, 254, 258, 267–268, 270, 272, 274, 279, 293–294  
actual domain, the 48  
agents 16, 18, 19–20, 22 25–26, 31–37, 49–53, 55–61, 72, 80, 83–86, 90, 93, 95, 99, 101, 105, 107, 122, 126, 129, 144, 148, 159, 162, 164, 180, 194, 205, 205, 218, 220–221, 224, 245, 246, 250–251, 254, 263, 267, 269, 279, 283–284, 287, 290–294  
Althusser, Louis 50, 63  
analytical dualism 20, 25, 47–48, 50, 195, 209  
Anderson, Benedict 36, 207, 218, 236  
Andrejevic, Mark 26, 69  
anti-communist approaches 156  
anti-Japanese sentiment 40, 144  
Antonsich, Marco 22–23, 31–32, 38, 63, 66, 190, 211  
April 19 Revolution, the 11, 17, 21, 39, 191, 200, 294  
April 27 Inter-Korea Summit in 2018, the 176  
Archer, Margaret 31, 36, 48–56, 58–60, 117, 150, 194–195, 205, 207–208, 213, 221, 229, 233, 250–251, 284, 287, 293  
Asian economic crisis, the 33, 39, 193, 169, 284  
assimilation policies 85  
authoritarian structure and culture 246  
axial coding 62–63, 196
- Baek Nam-Gi 198–199, 203  
Baker, Don 16, 209, 288  
banal nationalism 22, 30–31, 37, 190, 209  
Bhaskar, Roy 58  
blogs 56, 61, 67, 223, 270  
bottom-up nationalism 22, 31, 33–34, 74, 278–279  
Bourdieu, Pierre 50  
boycott against Japan 19, 115, 123, 127, 148  
Brubaker, Rogers 31, 33–34, 190  
Bryman, Alan 61–62  
Butler, Judith 50
- calculated nationalism 15, 19–20, 21–23, 25, 35, 43–47, 76, 83, 108, 137, 141, 146, 151, 176, 178, 180, 187, 202, 208, 277, 282, 291–294, 297, 302  
Campbell, Emma 46, 176, 189, 192  
capital-labour relations 57  
causal efficacy 52  
causal laws 48  
central conflation 48, 195  
Chinilpa 283  
Cho Hyun-A 257–258  
Cho Won-Jin 224, 232–233  
Cho Younghan 46  
Choo Mi-Ae 226  
Chun Kwang-Hoon 232  
Chun Woo-Yong 126  
Cohen, Anthony 22, 31, 33, 36–37, 41, 44, 189, 193, 217  
Cold War, the 16, 155, 162, 187, 203, 216, 225, 237  
comfort(ing) station 19, 71, 73, 77, 83, 91–92, 94–95, 100, 103, 106  
communication 16, 40, 111, 181, 183–184, 189, 197, 239, 241, 248, 265, 268, 284, 289  
communism 216, 219, 230–231  
Communist Party of China, the 226  
Confucianism 47  
Confucianist human relations 202  
consciousness 22–23, 32, 50, 53–54, 57, 59, 64, 66, 205, 211  
consumer animosity 117–118, 152–154  
consumer ethnocentrism 117, 121  
Corbin, Juliet 62–63, 80, 163, 196  
corporate agents 25, 52–53, 55, 58, 60–61, 85–86, 101, 105, 107, 279, 294  
cost-benefit nationalism 155, 157, 160–161, 177, 180, 282  
Council for the National Movement to Vindicate Park Geun-Hye, the 228  
COVID-19 124, 129, 131, 180, 189, 290, 295, 302  
Craib, Ian 33, 65  
critical realism 13, 25, 48, 63–66, 68–69, 209, 211, 239, 275, 279, 299  
cultural elaboration 50, 56, 164, 284, 293–294



- cultural emergent powers 48  
 cultural emergent properties (CEPs) 52, 59,  
 89–90, 246, 250–251, 289, 294
- Dagagagi*, the website of 71, 80, 99, 100  
 Damousi, Joy 77–78  
 decline of unionization 248  
*Democracy Index 2017* 18  
*Democracy Index 2020* 277, 285, 289  
 Democratic June Struggle, the 39  
 democratic movements 28, 39  
 Democratic Party, the 29, 124, 136, 165, 167,  
 224, 226, 235, 237, 286, 288, 301–302  
 Denuclearization 227  
 descriptive analysis 21, 119  
 Dezaki, Miki 144  
 divided Korea 19, 28, 41, 155, 169  
 division of the peninsula, the 22, 203  
 Dobson, Andrew 42, 217, 284  
 Dokdo Island 86, 124, 143  
 Donati, Pierpaolo 43, 45, 49, 58, 190  
 double morphogenesis 22, 55, 57, 99, 208,  
 267, 279  
 downward conflation 50, 195
- economic democratization 11, 15, 17, 21, 40,  
 191, 184, 235, 250, 277, 284–285, 287–288,  
 293–294, 296, 301–302  
 economic rights 45, 279  
 Edensor, Tim 30, 31, 190  
 elite nationalism 11, 32, 38  
 elite-led nationalism 41  
 elitist nationalistic sentiment 15  
 embedded nationalism 22, 27, 37–38  
 emergent structural properties 46, 86, 200,  
 269  
 empirical domain, the 48  
 ethnocentrism 49, 117, 121, 152–154  
 ethno-nationalistic sentiment 15, 160  
 everyday nationalism 30–38, 42–43,
- flag-carriers 66–67, 191, 209  
 flunkeyism 72  
 foot and mouth disease 45, 204  
 forced labour 19, 49, 71, 81, 104, 106, 121–124,  
 130, 132, 140–141, 146, 148, 151, 281, 291  
 Four Major Rivers Project 188  
 Fox, Jon E. 30, 35, 64–65, 190, 210–211, 247  
 fraternity 11, 41, 107, 202, 250, 289, 296,  
 301–302  
 fundamentalist Christians 155
- gapjil* (bullying) 19, 29, 49, 245–247, 249,  
 251, 253, 255, 257, 259, 261, 263, 265, 267,  
 269–271, 273–275  
 Gellner, Ernest 28, 150  
 Gemeinschaft 44, 291, 297  
 German reunification model, the 159–160,  
 164, 172–173, 182, 184
- Gesellschaft 44, 291, 297  
 Giddens, Anthony 50, 65, 195  
 Glick Schiller, Nina 36, 50, 69, 292  
 globalization 29, 38–39, 45–47, 68, 120, 248,  
 292  
 globalized cultural nationalism 46, 193  
 gold-collection campaign 41, 64, 193  
 Goodman, James 22, 25, 27–29  
 grassroots democracy 43  
 grassroots nationalism 15, 19, 22, 25, 27, 36,  
 38–43, 46, 79, 188, 191–193, 195, 197, 209–210,  
 217, 222, 277, 289–290, 292, 301  
 grounded theory methodology 62, 80, 163, 196  
 group elaboration 56  
 growth-oriented economy 246, 268  
 GSOMIA 283
- Hall, Stuart 32, 65, 68  
 Hanoi No-Deal, the 171, 175  
 Hearn, Jonathan 22, 30–32, 37–38, 46–50, 190  
 Herzfeld, Michael 34, 41, 189, 217  
 historical animosity 119–120  
 Hobsbawm, Eric 28, 30  
*homo sapiens* 54  
 honour killing 106  
 Horrocks, Ivan 49, 59, 205  
 human rights 11, 19, 34, 45, 60, 73, 76–79, 86,  
 88, 90–94, 96–97, 100–103, 105–106, 109–100,  
 112, 123, 144, 149, 151, 219, 250, 273, 279–282,  
 289, 291, 294, 296, 302  
 human/sex trafficking 73, 280  
 Humiko, Kawata 73, 98,  
 Hyundai Department Store 260
- Ihm Eun-Jeong 263  
 Ihm Jong-Seok 226  
 Independence Hall of Korea, the 74  
 individualism 40, 44, 46, 50, 67, 176, 193, 195,  
 212, 282, 292  
 individuated nationalism 46  
 Inter-Korean Agreements, the 162  
 internal conversation 51–52, 55, 63, 108, 210,  
 250  
 International Monetary Fund 40, 193  
 international solidarity (with the victims of the  
 “comfort women”) 103  
 internet news 61  
 intransitive dimension 22
- Japanese colonialism 27, 38, 71, 81, 90, 106, 116,  
 121–123, 146, 148, 151, 246, 263, 280, 286, 288  
 Japanese Diet, the 79, 87, 95, 107  
 Japanese imperialism 16, 21–22, 40, 76, 82,  
 85, 87, 91–92, 94, 96, 103, 111–112, 117, 122,  
 125–126, 142, 149–150, 191, 280, 288–289  
 Japanese military “comfort women,” the 13,  
 18–19, 71–75, 77–81, 83–85, 87, 89, 91–93,  
 95, 97, 99, 101, 103–105, 107, 109, 111–113, 115,  
 121–122, 124, 145, 279, 289, 291

- Jenkins, Richard 32, 37  
 JP Morgan 168  
*juche* (self-reliance) 39, 227  
 June Democratic Struggle (1987), the 191  
*June Struggle* in 1987, the 11, 15, 17, 21, 39, 76, 294
- Kaesong Industrial Complex 225, 240  
 Kaisei High school 138  
 Kan, Kimura 125  
 Kaufmann, Eric 32–33, 62, 67  
 Kiichi, Miyazawa 94  
 Kim Bok-Dong 94, 144, 279  
 Kim Hak-Sun 81, 83, 106  
 Kim Il-Sung 173  
 Kim Jong-Un 225–226, 232  
 Kim Sang-Jun 17, 74, 180, 225, 157–158, 160–162, 204, 263, 271, 297  
 Kim Sungmoon 47  
 Kim Yong-Hyeon 170  
 Kim Young-Sam 42  
 Kim Dae-Jung 40, 170, 172, 181–182, 193, 219, 225, 236, 281  
 Kim Yung-Myung 42  
 Knott, Eleanor 30, 33–36, 67, 190, 212  
 Koizumi, Junichiro 88, 91  
 Korean Air 29, 226, 245, 257  
 Korean conservatives 17, 149, 187, 216, 236  
 Korean Constitutional Court 96  
 Korean diaspora 41  
 Korean nationalism 15, 21, 35, 38–42, 44, 46–48, 62, 67–69, 72, 75, 77–78, 144, 188, 200, 202, 212, 215, 292, 299  
 Korean reunification 40, 164, 173, 184, 217  
 Korean Supreme Court, the 122, 124, 259  
 Korean War, The 11, 15, 38, 41–42, 47, 84, 121, 155, 162, 171, 180, 218, 277, 282, 286
- Layder, Derek 37, 46, 50, 67  
 Lee Da-Hye 203  
 Lee Myung-Hee 258  
 liberal pluralism 47  
 life chances 34, 48, 51, 55, 99, 195, 198, 201–202, 287, 301  
 life opportunities 20, 159, 187, 192, 209, 236, 268, 279, 285, 294  
 Little, Daniel 56, 67, 152
- Ma, Eric 40, 190, 217, 220  
 Machiko, Morikawa 98  
 Macpherson, C. Brough 44, 67, 193, 212–213  
 Malešević, Siniša 62, 67, 292, 298  
 March First Independence Movement 103, 141, 144  
 Marxist political economy, a 49  
 mechanism 48, 51, 57, 201, 231  
 media narratives 62, 160–161, 251  
 media representation 18, 61, 279  
 methodological collectivism 50  
 methodological individualism 50, 195  
 methodological nationalism 36, 50  
 micronationalism 190  
 Mill, John S. 35, 195  
 Mingers, John 48  
 Ministop 147  
 Ministry of Economy and Finance, the 165–166  
 Ministry of Reunification, the 157, 165, 182  
 Mitsubishi Heavy Industries 121  
 modernity 27, 46, 65, 209–210  
 Moon Jae-In 19, 108, 115, 132, 134, 156, 215, 217, 224–231, 233–234, 236, 238, 242–243, 263, 280–281, 289–290, 301  
 morphogenesis 9, 22, 25, 47, 55–59, 65, 67–68, 99, 146, 208, 211, 213, 242, 267, 279, 292  
 morphogenetic approach, the 19–20, 23, 25, 28, 38, 46, 48, 63, 66, 108, 195, 210–211, 238, 250, 272, 279, 297–298  
 multiculturalism 26, 39, 66, 109, 237, 272
- Namyang Dairy Products 252–253  
 national flag-carriers 18, 21, 162, 216, 283  
 national identities 15, 19, 21–22, 25–26, 30, 36–38, 40, 46, 65, 71, 78, 108, 277–278, 297, 301  
 national identity 23, 26–27, 32–34, 37, 62, 64–66, 68, 161, 189–190, 210–213, 290, 292, 297–298  
 national imagination 40, 217  
 National Intelligence Service 286  
 nation-building 36, 45, 164, 190  
 nationhood 34, 36, 65, 211  
 neo-liberalism 40, 46, 282, 292  
 netizen 40, 131, 141–142, 144  
 news reportages 62, 251  
 NewsTapa 264–266  
 Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal 121  
 Noh Hyeong-Il 45, 193  
 North-South Korean Summit 156, 274  
 North-South Summit in 2018, the 46, 169  
 nouveau-riche nationalism 28, 66, 77, 109, 272  
 nuclear-weapons 225
- OECD Better Life Index 245  
 open coding 62–63, 80  
 open nationalism 28, 39, 41, 67  
 Our Republican Party 224, 232–233, 238, 287
- Pachinko 86, 111  
 Pacific War, the 85  
 Park Chang-Jin 257–258  
 Park Chung-Hee 17, 24, 39, 42, 81, 91, 121, 191, 217–219, 226, 229–230, 235–236, 285, 294  
 Park Jeom-Kyu 264–266  
 patriarchy, the problems of 76  
 patriotic feelings 22  
 People Power Party 149, 180, 225, 235, 237, 283, 286, 288, 302

- perceived efficacy 118  
 personal emergent power (PEP) 48, 51, 55  
 personal identity 37, 52, 54, 190  
 personal nationalism 22–23, 31–32, 36–38, 64, 211, 239, 297  
 persons 51–56, 58, 104, 157, 174, 178, 255, 261, 265, 268  
 political legitimacy 41, 74  
 political-economic nationalism 42  
 Porpora, Douglas 13, 49–51, 53, 56–57, 68, 194–195, 200, 213, 222, 242  
 possessive individualism 44, 67, 193, 212  
 post-Fordist production regime, a 57  
 Presidential Transition Committee 288  
 primary agents 18, 25, 52–53, 60–61, 84, 99, 101, 107, 126, 218, 251, 279, 294  
 probable fallibility 293  
 pro-Japanese Koreans, the 91, 286  
 pro-Japanese traitors 72, 90, 103, 287–288  
 pro-Japanese, the 72, 90–91, 102–103, 106, 130, 281, 283, 286–288, 298–299  
 propaganda 16, 225  
 Prosecution Service/Office 29, 198, 235, 260, 263, 275, 284, 286, 289, 301  
 Protestant ethic, the 57, 69  
 pure-blood nationalism 27–28, 39
- quality of life 22, 156, 245–246, 274, 283  
 quality of working life 250
- real domain, the 48  
 reflexivity, reflexivities 52, 69, 238, 250–251, 271, 297, 299  
 reparation for the victims of the “comfort women” 74, 89, 122  
 retrodution 85, 122  
 reunification cost 161, 163–170, 175–177, 183–185  
 reunification education 157, 159, 181–182  
 Reunification lottery ticket 166, 176  
 Reunification Pot, the 165, 171  
 reunification tax 155, 157, 161, 163, 165–167, 169–170, 174–178, 182–184  
 Rhee Syngman 17, 42, 191, 200, 232  
 Rifkin, Jeremy 297–298  
 Roh Moo-Hyun 88, 219, 225, 236, 281, 296  
 Roh Tae-Woo 42, 191, 294  
 ROKS Cheonan Corvette, the 176–177  
 Rhyu Si-Min 292–293, 298–299
- Sanae High School 123  
 selective coding 62–63, 80, 163  
 self-awareness 54  
 self-consciousness 54  
 semi-primary data, the 61  
 Seon Dong-Ryul 45  
 Seoul Olympics in 1988, the 18  
*Sewolho*-ferry, the 188, 198–199, 201, 208–209  
 sex tours 81
- sexual slavery 13, 71–72, 74–75, 78, 80, 82, 84–85, 88–89, 94, 96, 105, 109, 111, 113, 279  
 Shin Chae-Ho 7, 132  
 Shin Gi-Wook 39, 40, 192  
 Shiraishi Takashi 140  
*Shusenjo* 95, 130, 144  
 Sino-Japanese War, the 80, 85  
 Skey, Michael 34, 36, 68  
 Smith, Anthony D. 28, 35, 68, 189–190, 195, 200, 213  
 social actor 15, 18, 20, 22, 25, 52–53, 55, 83–84, 86–91, 93, 95–97, 99–102–105, 108, 187, 207–208, 254, 267, 293  
 social agent 51–53, 55, 267  
 social consciousness 22  
 social constructionist 50  
 social desirabilities 62  
 social identity 53–54, 66  
 social movement 15, 17, 19–25, 27–28, 30, 32, 34–35, 46–48, 53–54, 56, 59, 61, 65, 68, 75–77, 79, 83–84, 90, 99, 101, 103, 106–107, 109, 111–112, 115, 194–195, 204–206, 213, 221–222, 239, 245, 278–279, 285, 287, 293, 301  
 social networking sites 128, 132, 134, 136, 141, 233  
 social structure 22, 31, 49, 51, 56–57, 68, 187, 199, 233, 250  
 sociological holism 50  
 solidarity 4, 22, 26, 74, 76–77, 87, 94–95, 103–104, 107, 125, 128, 139–140, 164, 266, 278, 288, 297  
 Son, Elizabeth 77  
 Song Do-Ja 88, 93–95, 103  
 South-North Exchange and Cooperation Project Fund, the 166–167  
 South-North Exchange Fund, the 166  
 sovereignty of a nation-state, the 16  
 sovereignty 16, 44, 85, 87, 90–91, 93, 149, 173  
 Soviet Union, the 16  
 Squid Game 260, 278  
 Stacey, Emily 22, 24, 26–27, 69, 189, 207, 213  
 standpattist 16, 90, 149, 264, 281, 286, 291  
 state-nationalism 38  
 Statue of Peace, the 74, 76, 84, 97, 139, 145  
 stratified conception of the self, the 54–55  
 stratified model of people, a 52  
 Strauss, Anselm L. 62–63, 68, 80, 109, 112, 163, 184, 196, 213, 243  
 structural conditioning 56, 194  
 structural emergent properties (SEPs) 51, 59, 84–86  
 structural properties 46, 55–56, 58, 83, 86, 200, 260, 262–263, 269, 282–283, 291, 293  
 structural vacuum 47  
 structuralism 50  
 Sunshine Policy, the 170, 172, 182, 219, 225  
 Sunstein, Cass 221, 243
- Tanaka, Yuki 77, 113  
*The Battle: Roar to Victory* 144

- The Five-Year Economic and Social Development Plans 284
- toadies 283
- toadyism 42
- Tochak Waegu-dang 283
- top-down nationalism 33–34, 39, 41, 74, 278
- trade provocation 19, 62, 108, 115–116, 120, 122–126, 128, 130, 134, 136–137, 139–140, 144–145, 150–151, 280–281, 291
- transitive knowledge 22
- transnationalism 46
- Trump, Donald 26, 175, 232
- U.S. House of Representatives, the 82, 97
- ubiquitous media 32, 270, 285, 294
- ultra-nationalistic 42
- UniQlo 128–129, 131
- United States' army military government, the 16
- upward conflation 50, 195
- Vietnam War, the 233, 281
- Volčič, Zala 26, 69
- Wada Haruki 140
- Weber, Max 57, 69, 195
- Wednesday Demonstrations/protests 74, 90–91, 94–96, 99, 103, 109
- westernization 11, 47, 82
- Wimmer, Andreas 36, 50, 69, 139, 292, 299
- Women and War Museum, the 75
- Workplace Anti-Bullying Law 268–269
- Workplace Bullying 119 (직장갑질 119) 245, 252, 264, 271, 285
- workplace bullying 19, 29, 245–253, 257, 259, 261, 263–275, 284–285, 295
- workplace violence 247
- World Happiness Report 245
- Yang Eun-Kyeong 45, 193
- Yasukuni Shrine, the 86, 90, 92
- YouTube 47, 58, 61, 196, 201, 222–223, 228, 232–234, 252, 264, 270
- Yun Bosun 191
- Yun Jeong-Ok 81



Nationalism in a nation-state reflects its emergent structural, cultural, and personal properties at a given time. In the politico-historical context of South Korea and the globe, the fruits of the *1968 Revolution in France* could not reach Korean society under its military regime and exploitative economic structure. This continued to frustrate the grassroots and especially social actors in South Korea, which eventually brought about the *June Struggle in 1987* and the *2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution*. *Calculated Nationalism in Contemporary South Korea* sketches Korean grassroots' perception of their nation-state, national identities, and what they desire regarding the future direction of their nation-state. The grassroots have openly spoken out about their frustrations through political rallies and media. This book attempts to reflect the minds of Korean progressives regarding, in particular, the forcibly recruited Japanese military “comfort women,” Abe’s trade provocation against South Korea in 2019, reunification, the *2016–2017 Candlelight Revolution*, National Flag-carriers’ struggles, and bullying at work.

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