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A NEW OR DIFFERENT MODEL OF NATIONALISM?
NATIONS OF THE CONFUCIAN CULTURAL SPHERE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Abstract. This paper focuses on Asian nationalism, which is hard to define and ambiguous. Analyzing the example of Japan, two Koreas and Mainland China, I try to answer several questions: Does Asian nationalism differ from Western nationalism, or perhaps we call it Asian because it occurs in Asia? Is it one unified Asian nationalism, or, for instance, are Korean and Japanese nationalisms totally different? Although nationalisms in specific Asian countries are different and often mutually conflicting (e.g. Korean is anti-Japanese), they share some features. Asian nationalisms are vibrant like no other and play an important role in the current internal and international politics of these countries.

Keywords: Asian nationalism; China; Japan; Koreas

NOWY CZY INNY MODEL NACJONALIMU?
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Abstrakt. Artykuł dotyczy nacjonalizmu azjatyckiego, który jest trudny do zdefiniowania i niejednoznaczny. Analizując przykład Japonii, obu państw koreańskich oraz Chin kontynentalnych, autor podjął próbę udzielenia odpowiedzi na szereg pytań: Czy nacjonalizm azjatycki różni się od zachodniego, czy też nazywamy go tak tylko dlatego, że występuje w Azji? Czy istnieje jednolity nacjonalizm azjatycki, czy też na przykład nacjonalizm koreański i japoński są całkowicie odmienne? Chociaż nacjonalizmy w poszczególnych państwach azjatyckich są różne i często skierowane przeciwko sobie (np. koreański jest antyjapoński), mają one pewne cechy wspólne. Nacjonalizmy azjatyckie są wyjątkowo prężne i odgrywają ważną rolę w obecnej polityce wewnętrznej i międzynarodowej tych państw.

Słowa kluczowe: nacjonalizm azjatycki; Chiny; Japonia; państwa koreańskie

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INTRODUCTION

Nationalism is one of the classical 19th-century ideologies which nowadays, in the context of the collapse of political ideologies, seem somewhat anachronistic.¹ So-called Asian nationalism has flourished for a long time. Although the phenomenon is not new, it is particularly significant on multiple levels – internationally, politically, socially and historically. Asian nationalism is still relevant and important because it determines global politics and economy as well as national and regional security.

Asian nationalism is distinctive. It is not typical because it heavily influences the relations between Asian neighboring states and defines their historical policy. This policy determines foreign affairs of a given state and makes it difficult to initiate and maintain proper relations which, in turn, threaten security of the region.

The aim of the article is to analyze the characteristic features of Asian nationalism on the basis of three representative states: Japan, the two Korean states and continental China.

1. NATIONALISM AS AN IDEOLOGY

Nowadays, the term “ideology” has a pejorative connotation and, as a result, many political parties dissociate themselves from classical ideologies in the era of their decline. The term itself is difficult to define, and it is associated with a kind of political philosophy. According to a general definition, an ideology is a systematized set of statements and views that promote interests of individual social groups. From an ideology one can derive a set of directives for political actions aimed at maintaining or changing specific social relations.² A feature which distinguishes an ideology from a doctrine or a political program is its deliberate lack of specificity, and providing general values, models and directives for action.³

Nationalism is one of the so-called grand ideologies of the 19th century. According to professor Kulesza nationalism belongs to the first group of

¹ Andrew Heywood, *Politologia*, trans. Marta Masojć et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2006), 79.

² Eugeniusz Zieliński, *Nauka o Państwie i Polityce*, 4th ed. (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2006), 229.

³ Zieliński, 230.

ideologies, namely the ideological-political thought of right-wing European politics, together with conservatism, fascism and authoritarianism.⁴ In Heywood's typology nationalism is divided into national/conservative, liberal/classical, anti-colonial and expansive.⁵

The basic assumption of classical nationalism is the primacy of one's own nation above all others and the national good and the interest of the nation are the most important in the hierarchy of values. This ideology had a significant influence on the formation of nation-states in Europe and then their national economies. Although the concept of national economies has lost its importance due to neoliberal ideology and integration processes, in recent years the world has witnessed a resurgence of these economies. Nationalism in extreme cases can take the form of racism, chauvinism or xenophobia. In the 20th century it gave way to fascism in Europe, and then in the 1990s it was reborn in the former USSR and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and now throughout Europe and the Russian Federation.⁶

2. NATIONALISM IN JAPAN (ナショナリズム)

The aggressive policy of the Japanese Empire in the 20th century made many enemies in the countries of the region. Japanese nationalism is still very much alive, not helping to normalize the relations with China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Republic of Korea (ROK) or other countries in the region.

It was no coincidence that Nazi Germany chose Japan to be one of the Axis Powers. The relations between these two countries were good, whereas their military and economic cooperation was facilitated by ideological similarities. The Japanese based the reform of society, economy and law largely on the German model.⁷ It was because of Japanese nationalism that the Kwantung Army perpetrated unimaginable atrocities on the civilian population of the conquered territories.⁸

⁴ Zieliński, 233.

⁵ Heywood, *Politologia*, 139–47.

⁶ Zieliński, *Nauka o Państwie*, 234.

⁷ Leszek Leszczyński, "Recepcja prawa z okresu Meiji – podłoże oraz wpływ na japoński porządek prawny," *Studia Iuridica Lublinensia* 19 (2013): 176–77.

⁸ Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937–1945: The Struggle for Survival* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), passim.

Nowadays, conservative politicians who sympathize with nationalists play an important role in domestic and foreign policy. Domestically, they support widespread militarism and seek to amend the constitution in order to end Japan's neutrality imposed after World War II. They also strengthen the Japan Self-Defense Forces which, despite not being formally recognized as an army, occupy the top places in the Global Firepower rankings (in 2023 Japan was listed 8).⁹ Shinzō Abe played an important role in the policy of modern Japanese militarism. In 2013, he established the National Security Council (NSCJ) and then he formed the first National Security Strategy (NSS).¹⁰ Moreover, in 1955 the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum was established (*Hiroshima Heiwa Kinen Shiryōkan* 広島平和記念資料館), which has epitomized Japanese martyrology for nationalists since then.¹¹ Each time the DPRK conducts missile tests, Japanese politicians talk about an external threat and fuel militaristic moods,¹² whereas some politicians, like Shinzō Abe and nationalists, consistently seek to amend the Constitution, Article 9 in particular, whereby Japan renounced war and an army.¹³

As regards the foreign policy, nationalism can be seen in the hard-line policy towards China and Korean states. A vivid expression of Japanese nationalism is the Yasukuni Shrine, which was established in 1869 as the main Shinto shrine in Japan. On this site stands a museum honoring "heroes" who died fighting for the Emperor and the shrine's Book of Souls (the souls of the dead, known as *kami* 神 in Japanese). It recalls names of 2,500,000 people who died fighting in military actions from 1868 until contemporary times. Most of these soldiers belonged to the Kwantung Army and a great number of them were classified by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) as Class A war criminals.¹⁴ Official visits to the Yasukuni shrine prove that nationalists are keener on national symbols than good

⁹ <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php> (accessed January 3, 2024).

¹⁰ Przemysław Pacuła, "Relacje Chin z wybranymi państwami w Azji Południowo-Wschodniej i Wschodniej i ich wpływ na bezpieczeństwo w regionie," *Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe* 2, no. 34 (2015): 83.

¹¹ Cf. Joanna Wardęga, "Wykorzystanie dyskursu historycznego w chińsko-japońskiej konkurencji o przywództwo w Azji Wschodniej – perspektywa chińska," in *Współczesne Chiny w kontekście stosunków międzynarodowych*, ed. Joanna Wardęga (Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2013), 235.

¹² Jingdong Yuan, "Japan's New Military Policies: Origins and Implications," SIPRI, February 2, 2023, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2023/japans-new-military-policies-origins-and-implications>.

¹³ Trevor W. Harrison, "Militarism and Nationalism in Japan," in *Against Orthodoxy. Studies in Nationalism*, ed. Trevor W. Harrison and Slobodan Drakulic (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 183.

¹⁴ Wardęga, "Wykorzystanie dyskursu," 240.

neighborly relations, not to mention the feelings of other Asian nations. All visits to the Yasukuni shrine paid by high-ranking politicians were vehemently opposed in the international arena, especially by China and Korea. Some top Japanese politicians in the rank of prime minister who visited this controversial shrine were Junichiro Koizumi (he would regularly visit this site),¹⁵ Shinzo Abe (though initially Abe promised not to visit Yasukuni to improve the relations with other Asian countries,¹⁶ he officially visited the place in 2013¹⁷), Suga Yoshihide¹⁸ and Fumio Kishida.¹⁹

Japanese nationalism can also be observed in the denial of war reparations due to Korea for the period of occupation in years 1910–1945. Nationalists linked to the Liberal-Democratic Party (Jap. *Jiyū-minshu-tō* 自由民主党) often denied Japan's guilt as an aggressor in the Pacific War and the very idea of paying reparations.²⁰ After the proclamation of the Republic of Korea, the official relationships with Japan were established as late as in 1965 under the Treaty on Basic Relations Between Japan and the Republic of Korea (Kor. *한일기본조약*) of 22 June 1965.²¹ As regards war reparations, they were addressed in another agreement, i.e. the Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims on Economic Cooperation of 1965. Article 1 of this document stipulated that the reparation was to be made within 10 years from signing the agreement, and that Japan was to supply Japanese goods and services worth 300 million dollars.²²

Another element of Japanese nationalism is the rising-sun flag (Jap. *Kyokujitsu-ki* 旭日旗). At present, the flag is flown only by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (Jap. *Kaijō Jieitai* 海上自衛隊); however, in South

¹⁵ Pacuła, "Relacje Chin," 81.

¹⁶ Wardęga, "Wykorzystanie dyskursu," 232.

¹⁷ Sheila A. Smith, "Abe's Yasukuni Visit: The Consequences?" Council on Foreign Relations, December 26, 2013, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/abes-yasukuni-visit-consequences>.

¹⁸ Mari Yamaguchi, "Japan's Premier Sends Offering to Controversial Tokyo Shrine," *AP News*, October 17, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/religion-japan-tokyo-yoshihide-suga-world-war-ii-ed72f781e3486e604d81a0c6e2bde8ae>.

¹⁹ "Japan PM Sends Ritual Offering to War Shrine, Risking Anger from China, Korea," *Korea Times*, October 17, 2022, <https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/world/20221017/japan-pm-sends-ritual-offering-to-war-shrine-risking-anger-from-china-korea>.

²⁰ Timothy Webster, "Japan's Transnational War Reparations Litigation: An Empirical Analysis," *Harvard International Law Journal* 63, no. 1 (2022): 182.

²¹ Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. Signed at Tokyo, on 22 June 1965, *Treaty Series* 583 (1966), no. 8471, pp. 44–48.

²² Agreement on the Settlement of Problems Concerning Property and Claims and on Economic Co-operation between Japan and the Republic of Korea. Signed at Tokyo, on 22 June 1965, *Treaty Series* 583 (1966): no. 8473, pp. 258–60.

Korea, North Korea, China and Russia it arouses a considerable controversy, comparable to the symbolism of the swastika in Europe.²³ The flag was already used by feudal warlords during the Edo period (1603–1868) under the name of *hiashi*,²⁴ and then, in the Meiji period it was adopted as the flag of the Imperial Japanese Army.²⁵ *Kyokujitsu-ki* was the official national symbol. The Japanese nationalists emphasize that the flag is internationally recognized, has a long-term historical justification, and is also associated with modern peacekeeping missions which involve Japanese ships.²⁶ This flag evokes negative feelings, especially in Korea, because it is associated with the times of Japanese occupation. Nowadays, there are numerous international incidents in this regard. For example, in December 2018, during joint exercises of allied troops of the USA, Korea and Japan on Jeju Island, the Koreans demanded that the Japanese ship do not fly the flag. The Japanese refused arguing that it was against the international maritime law.²⁷ While in May 2023, during joint defensive maneuvers, a Japanese Asagiri-class destroyer entered the port of Busan with its flag raised, which caused a wave of criticism.²⁸

3. NATIONALISM IN THE KOREAN STATES (내셔널리즘/국민주의)

During the Japanese occupation (1910–1945), Korean nationalism took the form of anti-Japanese and national independence movements.²⁹ The Koreans fought not only to regain their country but also their dignity. The Japanese conducted some pseudoscientific research in which Koreans were shown as subhuman, whereas they were presented as a master race.³⁰ After the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910, a number of independence organizations were established which carried anti-colonial and nationalist over-

²³ Junichiro Shoji, “The Debate over Japan’s Rising Sun Flag,” *NIDS* 89 (2019), 1.

²⁴ Shoji, 3.

²⁵ Shoji, 3.

²⁶ Shoji, 5.

²⁷ Shoji, 1.

²⁸ Min-ho Jung, “Japanese Destroyer Flies Controversial Flag as It Arrives in Korea for Joint Drill,” *Korea Times*, May 29, 2023, <https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/southkorea/defense/20230529/japanese-destroyer-flies-controversial-flag-as-it-arrives-in-korea-for-joint-drill>.

²⁹ Cf. Michael E. Robinson, “Nationalism and the Korean Tradition, 1896-1920: Iconoclasm, Reform, and National Identity,” *Korean Studies* 10 (1986): 49.

³⁰ Jin Woong Kang, “Historical Changes in North Korean Nationalism,” *North Korea Review* 3, no. 1 (2007): 91.

tones. Some of them formed anti-Japanese guerilla units, such as Doknip Eukoonboo Kwangbokdan (Righteousness Army Organization for the Restoration of Independence, 1913), Chosen Kookkwon Whoebokdan (Organization for the Restoration of Chosen National Sovereignty, 1915), and Kwangbokwhoe (Organization for the Restoration of Independence, 1917), and the March First Movement 1919.³¹ On April 1, 1919 in Shanghai, the Korean Provisional Government was formed.³²

After regaining its independence, Korea was reborn but as two separate states, contrary to the will of the Korean nation. The leaders of both republics, as well as different political and social movements sought reunification. It is worth emphasizing that the reunification of two Korean states is also a particular form of Korean nationalism and an important element of nationalisms in North and South Korea. North Korean and South Korean nationalism do not have a political form but an ethnic one, therefore they function as an engine for the future national reunification of Korea.³³

3.1 REPUBLIC OF KOREA (ROK)

South Korean nationalism is racial rather than national because it hinges on the notion of “being a Korean” rather than being part of the Republic of Korea. Some authors claim that, although Korea is divided into two different states, ethnic nationalism is present in both republics.³⁴ Therefore, reunification also informs Korean nationalism.

Under the Japanese occupation nationalism was connected with anti-Japanese independence movements, therefore Japanese authorities referred to all representatives of the Korean resistance movement as nationalists. During the initial period after the Republic of Korea was liberated from Japanese captivity, nationalists became the main political force. They organized themselves in newly established parties and took over the crucial offices in the state apparatus – among them was the first president of Korea, Rhee

³¹ Shin Kim, “Christianity and Korean Nationalism, 1884–1945: A Missiological Perspective” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2008), 107.

³² Se-yun Chang, “The Characteristics and Significance of the Korean Independence Movement: Understanding and Evaluation of the History of the Korean Independence Movement,” *Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe* 16, no. 2 (2018): 44.

³³ Gi-Wook Shin and Paul Yunsik Chang, “The Politics of Nationalism in U.S.-Korean Relations,” *Asian Perspective* 28, no. 4 (2004): 128.

³⁴ Shin and Chang, 123.

Syng-man (Kor. 이승만) and the first prime minister, Lee Beom-seok (Kor. 이범석).³⁵ President Rhee implemented economic reforms on ethnic and anti-communist nationalism. A similar situation took place under the authoritarian rule of Park Chung Hee.³⁶

Nationalists often emphasized some negative aspects of the relationship between South Korea and the United States of America, which can be perceived as a form of anti-imperial nationalism present in the Republic of Korea.³⁷ This type of nationalism is not so common as ethnic nationalism but it feeds on such social phenomena as the US support of authoritarian regimes (visible in supporting clearly anti-communist presidents). Anti-American sentiments among South Koreans also grew as a result of the imposition of high fees for the supplied military technologies and fees for the maintenance of American bases. It was also due to the reprehensible behavior of American soldiers who were stationed in bases on South Korean territory. To exemplify, in 1992 a soldier by the name Kenneth Lee Markle brutally murdered a prostitute, Yun Geum-i, in Camp Casey in Dongducheon.³⁸ In 2002, in another incident an American tank returning from maneuvers ran over two teenage girls and the soldiers were acquitted by the American Court.³⁹ There were many minor incidents involving riots, burglaries and beatings involving American soldiers, and they were often covered in the Korean media.

3.2 DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA (DPRK)

From the political perspective DPRK is a communistic state; however, ideologically it is closer to far-right nationalism or even fascism. The *Juche* ideology is nothing more than a specific form of nationalism that allowed Kim Il Sung to free himself from the USSR control. Being a form of North Korean ultra-nationalism, *Juche* guarantees sovereignty to the DPRK and its leaders. It also allows North Korean leaders to keep a political balance be-

³⁵ Natalia Kim, "Feminism and Nationalism in South Korea: Empowering Korean Women during the Nation-Building Process," *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* 30 (2017): 92.

³⁶ Shin and Chang, "The Politics of Nationalism," 125, 127.

³⁷ Shin and Chang, 138.

³⁸ Gwang-lip Moon, "After Soldier Held for Rape, U.S. Vows Assistance," *JoongAng Ilbo*, September 30, 2011, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130619020155/http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/html/170/2942170.html>.

³⁹ Shin and Chang, "The Politics of Nationalism," 138.

tween China and Russia. What is more, North Korean nationalism has also the form of anti-imperial nationalism whose rhetoric is directed against the United States and countries “dependent” on the USA – Japan and the Republic of Korea.⁴⁰

Since the very beginning (1945–1950), Kim Il Sung employed racial nationalism, modeled on the anti-Japanese nationalism of the occupation period, to build a state which would be based on a racially pure Korean nation.⁴¹ Racial nationalism based on the mythical origins of Kim Il Sung, combined with the myth of Tangun (both were born on the Holy Mountain of Pektu-san), strengthens and authenticates a racially pure and self-sufficient state.⁴² In the 1960s, after the Korean War and restoration of economy and agriculture, nationalism in the DPRK took the form of militarism which resembles Japanese militarism from the war period.⁴³

Kim Jong-un legitimizes his authoritarian power by strengthening nationalistic ideology of Juche, along with the legendary status of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, in culture, mass media and education.⁴⁴ At present, North Korean nationalism is based on the self-sufficient and purely Korean ideology of Juche, while Marxism and Leninism is of a lesser importance. It is worth noting that although Confucianism was initially rejected for being an outdated and post-feudal concept, it is now growing in popularity as an idea that supports Juche ideology.⁴⁵

4. NATIONALISM IN PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

(*mínzú zhǔyì* 民族主義)

The concept of the middle state/Middle Kingdom can be considered the core of Chinese political, economic and cultural nationalism. For a very long time, the Chinese have referred to their motherland as 中国 *Zhongguo* (from *zhōng* ‘central’ and *guó* ‘state’), thus pointing to China being the civiliza-

⁴⁰ Shin and Chang, 127.

⁴¹ Cf. Erdem Güven, “The Juche System and the DPR Korea Media as Official Mouthpiece of the Kim Family: Pyongyang Times Newspaper Website Analysis,” *Global Media Journal TR Edition* 19, no. 10 (2019): 199.

⁴² Güven, 205.

⁴³ Mitsuhiro Kimura, “From Fascism to Communism: Continuity and Development of Collectivist Economic Policy in North Korea,” *The Economic History Review* 52, no. 1 (1999): 84.

⁴⁴ Güven, “The Juche System,” 207.

⁴⁵ Shin and Chang, “The Politics of Nationalism,” 134.

tional center. The first notions of *Zhongguo* are to be found under the Shang dynasty,⁴⁶ though the very term was developed under the Zhou dynasty.⁴⁷

If other countries adopted Chinese civilization, they recognized its superiority and the Chinese treated them as both allies and vassals.⁴⁸ Countries or peoples outside China's cultural circle were contemptuously called "barbarians". Thus, in a way, the concept of *Zhongguo* assumed that only China was a sovereign state while all other states were either vassals/allies or barbarians. It was believed that there could be only one Son of Heaven (Emperor of China) who had power over everything, restored and maintained the balance – the idea referred to as *tianxia* 天下, i.e. "all under heaven".⁴⁹ The ruler was given a mandate from heaven (*tianming* 天命)⁵⁰ and as long as he was able to retain the balance (meaning that he ruled well), he maintained his mandate. By disturbing the balance, he could be deprived of the mandate and the people had the right to rebel. Nowadays, nationalists also refer to the concept of *Zhongguo* in the context of returning to China's domination in the world.⁵¹

Confucianism, which was the fundamental state ideology of the Han period, may also have been a source of Han nationalism. The *Analects*, a classic Confucian text, referred to the approach to neighboring tribes in this way:

The Master was wishing to go and live among the nine wild tribes of the east. Some one said, "They are rude. How can you do such a thing?" The Master said, "If a superior man dwelt among them, what rudeness would there be?" 子欲居九夷。或曰：「陋，如之何！」子曰：「君子居之，何陋之有？」⁵²

Elsewhere, there is a clear manifestation of the view that Confucian culture is superior to what is described as uncivilised tribes:

Fan Chi asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, "It is, in retirement, to be sedately grave; in the management of business, to be reverently attentive; in inter-

⁴⁶ Krzysztof Gawlikowski, "Starożytna geneza nazwy 'Państwo Środka': na tropach formowania tożsamości chińskiej," *Azja-Pacyfik*, no. 21 (2018): 12.

⁴⁷ Gawlikowski, 16.

⁴⁸ Shih Chih-yu, "Ethnic Economy of Citizenship in China," in *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China*, ed. Merle Goldman and Elisabeth J. Perry (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 234.

⁴⁹ Gawlikowski, "Starożytna geneza," 18.

⁵⁰ Gawlikowski, 18.

⁵¹ Cf. Luke S. K. Kwong, "What's in a Name: Zhongguo (Or 'Middle Kingdom') Reconsidered," *The Historical Journal* 58, no. 3 (2015): 804.

⁵² Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org/analects/zi-han>.

course with others, to be strictly sincere. Though a man go among rude, uncultivated tribes, these qualities may not be neglected.”

樊遲問仁。子曰：「居處恭，執事敬，與人忠。雖之夷狄，不可棄也。」⁵³

In a similar tone, we find a fragment from chapter 6 of book XV:

Zi Zhang asked how a man should conduct himself, so as to be everywhere appreciated. The Master said, “Let his words be sincere and truthful and his actions honorable and careful – such conduct may be practiced among the rude tribes of the South or the North. If his words be not sincere and truthful, and his actions not honorable and careful, will he, with such conduct, be appreciated, even in his neighborhood? When he is standing, let him see those two things, as it were, fronting him. When he is in a carriage, let him see them attached to the yoke. Then may he subsequently carry them into practice.” Zi Zhang wrote these counsels on the end of his sash.

子張問行。子曰：「言忠信，行篤敬，雖蠻貊之邦行矣；言不忠信，行不篤敬，雖州里行乎哉？立，則見其參於前也；在輿，則見其倚於衡也。夫然後行。」子張書諸紳。⁵⁴

During the Chinese revolution of 1925–1927, a new Chinese nationalism was emerging around Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen.⁵⁵ After their defeat in the civil war in 1949, the nationalists of the Republic of China continued to rule Taiwan, claiming that they were representatives of all of China.⁵⁶ At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ruling on the mainland was building nationalism based on Sino-centrism and anticolonial sentiments. The nationalistic policy of the CCP led and still leads to the forced assimilation or discrimination of national minorities,⁵⁷ although the constitution guarantees the equality of all ethnic groups and gives the possibility to exercise the right of autonomy (Article 4).⁵⁸ The Chinese authorities declare that there is no discrimination against racial minorities (Deng Xiaoping said

⁵³ Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org/analects/zi-lu>.

⁵⁴ Chinese Text Project, <https://ctext.org/analects/wei-ling-gong>.

⁵⁵ Małgorzata Gmurczyk-Wrońska, “Obraz Chin w raportach dyplomatycznych Stanisława Patka,” *Azja-Pacyfik*, no. 16 (2013): 64.

⁵⁶ Wojciech Ostrowski, “Droga Tajwanu do demokracji,” *Azja-Pacyfik* 5, no. 1 (2002): 145, 150.

⁵⁷ Jerzy Bayer, “Problem chińskiego nacjonalizmu do momentu proklamowania Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej,” *Azja-Pacyfik*, no. 15 (2012): 34.

⁵⁸ *China (People’s Republic of)’s Constitution of 1982 with Amendments through 2004*, Constitute, April 27, 2022, accessed February 29, 2024, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/China_2004.pdf?lang=en.

that openly to the former US president, Jimmy Carter⁵⁹); however, even now the Uyghurs and other minorities are persecuted. The Uyghurs in particular are in a difficult position on account of their Turkic origin (and not from a Han minority) they are subject to discrimination and persecution on religious, cultural and economic grounds.⁶⁰ The Chinese authorities justify their actions with security reasons and anti-terrorism policy.⁶¹

The current aspiration of China to annex Taiwan are the most striking manifestation of Chinese nationalism. This aspiration, enshrined in China's Constitution and the policies of various leaders, is also part of the phenomenon of racial ethnic nationalism. For example, Jiang Zemin said that China and Taiwan are inhabited by people of the same race and language (*tong zhong, tong wen*).⁶² However, although the aspiration of the CCP to annex Taiwan to mainland China is one of the foundations of Chinese nationalism, there are disputes as to whether it is ethnic nationalism based on the unity of the nation that originates from the Han dynasty or rather state nationalism. Some people perceive it as a policy within the framework of state nationalism which is an undefined tool of the CCP's policy.⁶³

It is also worth emphasizing that Chinese nationalism has an anticolonial overtone directed against the former Western empires from the century of humiliation and, to a greater extent, against Japan.⁶⁴ A good example of this is the dispute over the phenomenon of the so-called "comfort women". Japanese occupying forces in China, Manchuria and Korea established a system of "comfort stations", where women, mainly Korean and Chinese, were forced to provide sexual services to Japanese soldiers.⁶⁵ To this day, Japan has not taken full responsibility for this practice and neither an official apology was made nor compensation was given. Although in 1995 a private foundation called the Asian Women's Fund was established, this institution

⁵⁹ Barry Sautman, "Racial Nationalism and China's External Behavior," *World Affairs* 160, no. 2 (1997): 80.

⁶⁰ Endah Rantau Itasari, "Legal Protection of Uighur Muslim Ethnic in China from Perspective Human Rights," *Lambung Mangkurat Law Journal* 1, no. 6 (2021): 36.

⁶¹ Mellisa Towadi, Nur Mohamad Kasim, Rumawi Rumawi, and Siti Asifa Tahir, "An Indication of China's Policy towards Uighurs and its Implications by International Law Aspects," *Jambura Law Review* 3, no. 1 (2021): 64.

⁶² Sautman, "Racial Nationalism," 80.

⁶³ Timothy S. Rich, "Chinese Nationalism and Cross-Strait Relations in the Post War Era," *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 7, no. 2 (2011): 3.

⁶⁴ Rich, 4.

⁶⁵ There was also a smaller number of women of other origins, like Filipinas, Thais and Malaysians, as well as some Dutch women from the Philippines.

was intended to silence the matter in exchange for small compensation and after numerous controversies (for example, the Chinese government banned women from accepting any compensation from the fund) it was dissolved in 2007.⁶⁶ Both in China, Korea and Japan there were single cases for compensation for comfort women. For example in 1998 the court in Yamaguchi and in 2003 the court in Hiroshima awarded compensation on the grounds of violation of human rights.⁶⁷ The problem is, however, the fact that the Japanese authorities have never admitted any guilt over the issue of sexual slavery, as demanded by China and Korea.

It is common knowledge that currently the CCP is communist in name only. Paradoxically, the departure from communist ideology proves to further strengthen Chinese nationalism, which plays a significant role both in foreign and domestic policy.⁶⁸ Anti-Japanese sentiments both among young and old people, fueled by appropriate anti-Japanese policies, often result in boycotts of Japanese products or even mass protests and attacks on diplomatic outposts. A vivid example of this were the 2005 protests against the attempts of Japanese nationalists to distort history in school textbooks.⁶⁹

CONCLUSIONS

Is there one Asian nationalism or are there three separate nationalisms, proper to Japan, China and Korea? Undoubtedly, these three nationalisms are very different phenomena. And even if there is one, common Asian nationalism, it is related to the intensity and distinctiveness of these three nationalisms.

The analyzed examples of China, Japan and Korean states do not provide clear conclusions as to whether there is one, common Asian model of nationalism other than nationalism understood as a Western political ideology. Chinese, Japanese and Korean nationalisms are different in many respects and often define themselves as opposed to one another, yet some similarities can also be found. All of them are more explicit and transparent than any other European nationalism. They are permanently present not only in foreign and domestic policy of these countries but also in the language, culture and tradition. A good example of this is a conservative view on sovereignty

⁶⁶ Wardega, "Wykorzystanie dyskursu," 238–39.

⁶⁷ Wardega, 237.

⁶⁸ Cf. Rich, "Chinese Nationalism," 14.

⁶⁹ Wardega, "Wykorzystanie dyskursu," 246.

and political independence and an extremely low level of integration tendencies⁷⁰ in East Asia.

Asian nationalisms are more modern and up-to-date than their neo-nationalist counterparts in Europe. Finally, it is worth adding that all of them have a different orientation towards individualism than it is in classical (Western) nationalism. In classical nationalism the value of the state as a community prevails over an individual, whereas in the Asian-Confucian model of society there is a strong emphasis on collectivism, which is even stronger in the case of Asian nationalisms.

A common feature of Asian nationalisms is that in many cases they arose from an opposition to the arrogance and colonialism of Western powers.⁷¹ By contrast, Western countries believe that the lack of integration along the lines of the European Union results in the growth and strengthening of individual Asian nationalisms and, therefore, the integration of countries and economies in this part of the world could limit or alleviate the phenomenon of Asian nationalisms.⁷²

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⁷⁰ Unlike united Europe (the European Union and other organizations), countries in East Asia value their political independence and are reluctant to join in any political integration initiatives that could limit their sovereignty.

⁷¹ Cf. Gerd Langguth, "Asian Values Revisited," *Asia Europe Journal* 1 (2003), passim; and Adam W. Jelonek, "Azja rejonu Pacyfiku a system światowy; uwagi u progu nowego wieku," *Azja-Pacyfik* 5 (2002): 103.

⁷² Lay Hwee Yeo, "Can the EU Be a Serious Security Actor in Asia?" *Asia Europe Journal* 11, no. 4 (2003): 467.

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