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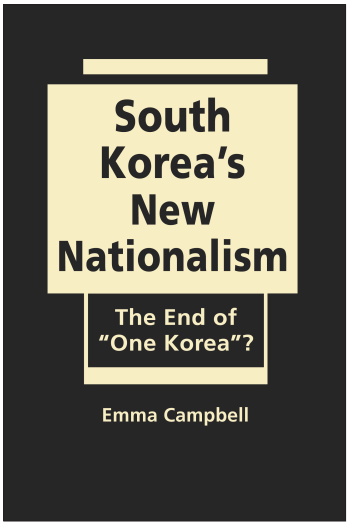
South Korea's New Nationalism: The End of "One Korea"?

Emma Campbell



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Nationalism in South Korea

"Unite our country! Korea is one!"
—Im Su-gyeong, the South Korean student who traveled illegally to Pyongyang in 1989 to attend the 13th Annual International Student Youth Festival. She was arrested and jailed on her return to the South.

"To be honest, I don't care if unification is achieved or not."
—South Korean university student in 2010.

It is June 2010 in Seoul. South Korea is in the midst of the 2010 Football World Cup and the nation is watching television. "*Dasihanbeon!*" (one more time), demands the South Korea Telecom advertisement, with the comedian and popstar Psy calling on South Korean players and fans to repeat the performance of the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup. The World and Olympic Champion ice skater Kim Yu-na and Korean boy band "Big Bang" perform their "Shouting Korea" soccer supporters' song and dance (on behalf of Hyundai Motors). Almost every advertisement references the South Korean soccer team in some way, and by the end of the five minute commercial break the viewer's patriotic devotion to the South Korean team and nation is sealed. This selection of advertisements neatly characterizes the research that is the heart of this book: we witness the vigor of Korean youth culture, the strength of South Korean nationalism, the ubiquitous presence of Korea's economy and the *jaebol*, and the power of national symbols; and we witness the perfect absence of North Korea.

The absence of even token references to North Korea or the North Korean soccer team from the selection of advertisements would be less notable but for the fact that this was the first Football World Cup where teams from both the North and the South participated.[1] It was symbolic of something interesting and significant.

Korea, albeit divided, is said to be a nation built upon ethnic nationalism and the idea of a single ethnic nation (*danil minjok)*, where the majority of people hope for unification (Shin 2006; IPUS 2012). In the past, elites have even discussed the prospect of unified Korean teams competing in international sporting events. Thus the deafening silence regarding the North Korean team during coverage of the 2010 Football World Cup was painfully conspicuous when set against the fever-pitched atmosphere surrounding South Korea and its team. South Korean games brought thousands of supporters onto the streets to watch their team on huge screens. North Korean games attracted only a few spectators who stopped by chance to watch.[2] North Korea may as well have been any other minor nation participating in the tournament. Indeed, the South Korean audience was more interested in the teams of Brazil, Argentina and England than the team of their brothers in the North.

It was not always like this. Despite the division of Korea following the Second World War, and the subsequent catastrophe of the Korean War that pitched the North against the South, definitions of nation and nationalism shared by young people in the South had included the territory and people of the North. This inclusion was often evident in the rhetoric and actions of the South's youth and student movement, a movement which defined and influenced much of the oppositional political ideology throughout South Korea's authoritarian era (N. Lee 2007). The nationalist discourse of the student movement demanded democracy and development in South Korea and opposed perceived neo-colonialist relationships with Japan and the United States. There were also frequent expressions of nationalist sentiment that expressed the desire for Korean unification and the unity of the North Korean and South Korean people. This unification-based nationalism continued until the 1990s.

By the late 1990s, however, attitudes to unification and North Korea were changing. Unification no longer played a prominent role in the discourse of the student movement and young people, and opinion polls on unification began to show a trend toward more negative sentiment. With the arrival of the new millennium, anecdotal evidence—and gradually survey data—was suggesting not only that young people were becoming increasingly hesitant and nervous about unification, but also that a growing number were explicitly opposed to unification (Breen 2008; S. Lee 2006).

These changing attitudes to unification and identity reflect the emergence of a new nationalism and national identity among young people in South Korea. This generation of South Korean young people in their twenties, known in Korean as the *isipdae*,[3] has been constructed and shaped by an entirely new South Korean context. They have grown up

knowing only a democratic, economically prosperous and stable South Korea. These young people have no memory of relatives and family in the North, and no experience of the authoritarian era or the democracy movement. They are highly educated, well-traveled, technologically savvy, and fashion conscious, and their life experiences are different in almost every way to that of their parents' and grandparents' generations. Korea is a country transforming so quickly that even oldest and youngest siblings can find themselves growing up in very different worlds. Given this dramatic pace of change in South Korea, South Korea's twenty-somethings are not only part of a different generation, but also a different nation. They define themselves and their national identity in terms wholly unfamiliar to those in the older generations. This is the first generation which defines itself in terms of the southern part of the peninsula. This is the first generation of *South* Koreans.

The Central Puzzle

Long-held demands in South Korea for unification have been dramatically challenged in recent years, especially among young South Koreans. That change may seem a puzzle to those observers whose understanding of South Korea is primarily informed by the traditional ethnically-based analysis of nation and nationalism. This book provides the answer to that puzzle by demonstrating the emergence of a *new sense* of the South Korean nation and national identity which is inspired by a *new type* of nationalism.

For many South Korean twenty-something young people, their nationalism and national identity is expressed only in terms of the Republic of Korea, South Korea, and this group of young people define *uri nara*, meaning "our nation," as South Korea. This new South Korean nationalism manifests itself in the lives of South Korean young people through expressions of pride in South Korea's modernity, cosmopolitanism and status, and can be categorized as a globalized cultural nationalism. As a result, the importance of ethnicity in expressions of national identity is waning.

This new South Korean globalized cultural nationalism represents a *new category* of nationalism. It is a nationalism that requires adherence to definite cultural norms in order for an individual to be included in the national unit. The globalized element of this new nationalism represents the importance of concepts of the global and international in its expressions and formation. This book analyzes the development and nature of this new type of nationalism and will describe how the globalization of young people's lives, democracy and "banal nationalism"

operate to challenge the dominance of ethnic nationalism and to construct new expressions of identity. Further, it will argue that young people are actively adopting and embracing this new South Korean globalized cultural nationalism because of the changes brought about by the globalization of South Korean society. The fear of unification and its possible social and economic consequences encourage young people to reject a unified Korean identity and embrace the South Korean national identity as they face challenges in South Korea including intense competition in the social, educational and academic sphere and increased economic uncertainty.

This book will also examine how the globalized cultural characteristics of South Korea's emerging nationalism are expressed in practice. It will focus on growing perceptions of difference and separation between South Korean young people and ethnic Korean immigrants to South Korea, as well as this new nationalism's capacity to include non-ethnic Korean immigrants when imagining the Korean nation, highlighting the decreasing importance of ethnic ties in explaining South Korean national identity.

Theoretical Framework: The Three-Level Analysis of Nationalism

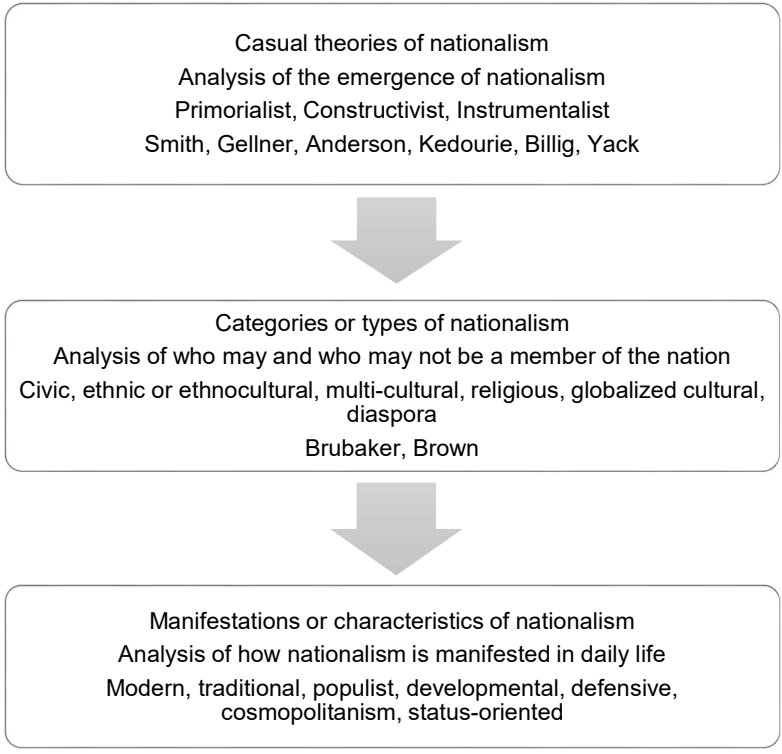
Understanding this new South Korean nationalism requires three levels of analysis. Firstly, one must address the question of how South Korean nationalism and the South Korean nation come into existence. This can be answered using the "causal theories" of nationalism, and in particular the constructivist approaches proposed by Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson along with the instrumentalist approaches proposed by scholars including Elie Kedourie.[4]

At the next level, there is the question of what is the category or type of this new South Korean nationalism. An analysis of the "category" or "type" of nationalism provides an understanding of *the nature of the nationalism that has come into existence*. Categories of nationalism (for example, civic, ethnic, religious, multicultural) define membership and who may or may not qualify to be accepted within a nation. An ethnic nationalism, for example, may exclude someone based on their ethnicity or ancestry, while a civic nationalism may preclude potential members because of their political affiliation.

Uncovering the category or type of nationalism may, in part, rely on a third level of analysis: an examination of the manifestations or characteristics of the nationalism and the nationalist sentiment. While the characteristics or manifestations of nationalism are not "types" of nationalism in

themselves, they are expressions of national identity in daily life which can help to identify the category of nationalism that is salient. For example, nationalist manifestations might include an emphasis upon adherence to cultural tradition or directing anger toward those who associate outside of the ethnic group, and such manifestations may suggest the existence of an ethnic nationalism. Figure 1.1 outlines the theoretical framework for analyzing this new South Korean nationalism emerging among young people.

Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework for Analyzing the Emerging New South Korean Nationalism



Causal Theories of Nationalism and the Analysis of the Emergence of Nations

The well-known theoretical discussions on nations and nationalism focus upon the constructivist, the instrumentalist and the primordialist analyses of the origins of nations. One of the most vibrant debates has taken place within the "classical school" of nationalism whose proponents include Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith and Elie Kedourie. These scholars are united in their claim that nationalism is a relatively recent phenomenon and the core mode of identity in modern society. Their approaches differ, however, in terms of how and why nations first come into being. Primordial ideas of nationalism advanced by Smith (1986) propose that nations are deeply rooted in history arising from what Smith terms an "ethnie," and it is this history upon which the modern nation is built. Countering this argument are constructivist or modernist scholars, such as Gellner and Anderson, who point to social interactions, processes and networks that arose only in the modern era and provided the basis for the construction of nations. Instrumentalists, such as Kedourie, believe that nations are consciously created by social and political actors and are used to justify a secondary purpose.

Classical constructivist and instrumentalist analyses, such as those by authors like Gellner, Anderson and Kedourie, provide the most useful approaches to understanding why a new South Korean nationalism is emerging among young people. However, combining the classic constructivist analyses of the origins of nations with contemporary constructivist models provide additional tools and allows for a more relevant application of constructivist theory in understanding the evolution of new nationalisms. Examples of contemporary constructivist approaches include Michael Billig's theory of banal nationalism and Bernard Yack's analysis of the role of democracy in promoting the formation of national units and nationalism. These approaches are used in this book alongside an analysis of the role of globalization to examine the emergence of globalized cultural nationalism.

The framework for the analysis that has been outlined above will also use an instrumentalist approach to argue that the adoption and acceptance of the South Korean globalized cultural nationalism by young people has been a *conscious* choice in order to protect their common interests and goals. This approach reveals a bottom-up, and broadly collective and societal, choice among growing numbers of young people to actively accept and adopt this new national identity and question unification and a unified identity. It is interesting that these findings are different to those revealed by most instrumentalist analyses in the existing theoretical

literature, which tend to unearth top-down or elite manipulation of nations and nationalism to achieve distinct aims. This work, therefore, has important implications for the emergence of nationalism in comparative contexts.

Types and Categories of Nationalism

Identifying the "category" or "type" of this new South Korean national identity provides an understanding of who may and who may not qualify for membership of the South Korean nation. In the past, ideas of nation and nationalism in Korea have been based upon the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of all Korean people, an ethnic "type" of nationalism.

However, types of nationalism operating inside a nation are not fixed and can change. Brubaker (1998, p. 298) writes that ethnic and national groups should not be assumed to be "sharply bounded, internally homogeneous 'groups'." Instead, "groupness" and "boundedness" must be taken "as *variable*, as *emergent properties* of particular structural or conjunctural settings." Nations are being continually shaped by the shared experiences of their peoples and elites, often by combinations of events, especially critical ones. Postmodern networks and ties such as those based upon gender, globalization and universal human rights have further affected the evolution of nations as units of association. Because nations are constantly changing, Brubaker challenges scholars to expect evolution in the types of nationalism and national identity operating inside those societies.

We see signs of such evolution in the Korean peninsula. Although divided into two political units it was, from the time of partition, conceived by young South Koreans as a single national unit. In the case of South Korea, however, that concept of the Korean peninsula as a single national unit is undergoing change. The changing attitudes to unification have signaled a possible evolution in the nature of identity and nationalism resulting in an emerging new nationalism that exists alongside, and challenges, existing concepts of the Korean nation.

The question, therefore, is what type of nationalism has emerged in South Korea? The most common dichotomy in nationalist categorization is civic versus ethnic nationalism.[5] Brown (2000, p. 51) defines ethnic nationalism, or as he prefers, ethno-cultural nationalism, as "a sense of community which focuses on belief in myths of common ancestry, and on the perception that these myths are validated by contemporary similarities of physiognomy, language or religion." Civic nationalism, he writes, is "a sense of community which is focused on the belief that residence in a common territorial homeland, and commitment to its state and civil

society institutions, generate a distinctive national character and civic culture, such that all citizens, irrespective of the diverse ancestry, comprise a community in progress with a common destiny" (Brown 2000, p. 52).

The types of nationalism recognized in the academic literature, however, have increased in number as nationalisms continue to evolve in a changing world. The possible types or categories we might use now include cultural nationalism, trans-border (diaspora) nationalism, multicultural nationalism, and religious nationalism. Multiple categories of nationalism might operate at any one time in a nation (for example ethnocultural *and* ethno-religious nationalism). For those who argue that ethnic and cultural nationalisms are so interrelated as to be indivisible, the rise of South Korean globalized cultural nationalism demonstrates how ethnic nationalism and cultural nationalism are distinct categories of national identity, which can coexist. The key to adequately categorizing nationalism is to understand and detail the characteristics or manifestations of its operation.

From this growing list of types or categories, instead of ethnic and cultural nationalism a third possible categorization for the new South Korean identity can be found: multicultural nationalism. Brown writes that multicultural nationalism "offers a vision of a community which respects and promotes the cultural autonomy and status equality of its component ethnic groups" (Brown 2000, p. 126). Critics of multicultural nationalism point to its potential to discourage a national community and to allow ethnic communities to live separately and distinctively (Lasch 1995; Huntington 2005), but others argue that the concept of multicultural nationalism can bring about a more just distribution of power and resources within a political and national community by ensuring minorities are able to have their interests recognized alongside those of the majority (Brown 2000, pp. 131–132).

Analysis of the daily manifestations or expressions of nationalism among young people in South Korea shows that none of these existing types of nationalism can adequately describe and categorize the new South Korean nationalism. The analysis reveals that we are witnessing the emergence of a *globalized cultural nationalism* that is based upon shared cultural values—modernity, cosmopolitanism and status—influenced in their formation and expression by globalization and neo-liberal values. This represents a *new* category of nationalism and contests the importance of ethnicity in young people's conception of the South Korean nation and its component members. As we will see, using this new categorization also enables us to better understand the capacity of the new South Korean nationalism for inclusion and exclusion in the South Korean national

community. Indeed, its capacity for exclusion demonstrates less cosmopolitan characteristics of globalized cultural nationalism such as patriarchy, social class, neo-liberal and neo-colonial attitudes in determining who can be "imagined" (Anderson 1983) as a member of this changing South Korean nation.

Manifestations of Nationalism

The manifestations or characteristics of nationalism describe how nationalism is exhibited in the daily lives of individual members of the nation. By focusing on the fields of social and political life in which nationalism is expressed, we can better understand the implications of the emergence or existence of a particular category of nationalism or national identity. Ethnic nationalism, for example, may be expressed through a variety of characteristics or manifestations including adherence to cultural traditions, political populism, or hostility toward a certain ethnic group. The implication for a society in which ethnic nationalism is operating, therefore, depends upon how that nationalism manifests itself and how it is expressed.

In the case of South Korea, the new nationalism has manifested itself through three characteristics—modernity, cosmopolitanism and status—all of which are essentially cultural expressions. Modernity refers to pride in South Korea's economic achievements and advancement in all aspects of Korean life; the characteristic of cosmopolitanism reflects the rise and importance of international experience and learning in Korean youth culture; and status refers to the importance placed upon South Korea's national status and standing by young South Koreans as well as to their individual and family economic and social status (Campbell 2015). Through an exploration of these expressions of national identity in the daily lives of South Korean young people, we reveal both the causes and the form of the globalized cultural nationalism that is emerging among the *isipdae* in South Korea. These manifestations of nationalism are closely linked with ideas of the global and international in their formation and expression, and implicit in these globalized manifestations of identity and nation is the importance of globalization in the causation or construction of this new nation and nationalism.

The manifestations of this evolving nationalism differentiate it from not only ethnic nationalism but also a civic type of nationalism. Expressions of civic nationalism focus on a commitment to national institutions and systems, rather than values such as modernity, cosmopolitanism and status expressed in this newly emerging globalized cultural national identity. Indeed, and as we will see later, a common feature in interviews

with young people is a disillusionment with South Korea's institutions, traditions and political culture.

General Methodological Issues

The importance of analyzing the daily manifestations of nationalism is rooted in the methodological approaches that have been engaged in the research for this book: political ethnography and the case study method. Ethnography, or "political ethnography," is useful because many methods typically used in political science research just rely on survey data, economic statistics or pooled expert opinions. These might "*register the occurrence of change*; they do not *specify the mechanism of change*" (Kubik 2009, p. 33). Political ethnography and understanding of micro-level activity is essential to any macro-level analysis, because "it is, after all the reproduction and transformation of daily lives that are observable, not 'structural change'" (Kubik 2009, p. 33). Political ethnography, therefore, allows researchers to reach often overlooked or hidden or ambiguous sources of power and change that are important in our efforts to understand how large-scale processes take place.

The case study method is particularly useful when questions such as "how" or "why" are posed in a contemporary context as in this case of an emerging South Korean globalized cultural South Korean nationalism (Yin 1994, p. 1). This method enables the study of an "in-case variation," looking at changes over time within a specific country. It is "an all-encompassing method" that allows for the analysis of a puzzle that may involve many contingent variables, and where data collection and analysis needs to be guided by the construction of a preliminary theoretical framework while at the same time also helping to inform the theory as the research progresses (Yin 1994, pp. 13, 27).

In general, the bulk of academic research and data available on attitudes to unification in the period before the 1990s related only to students and student activists, rather than the wider population of young people. For the purposes of studying the "in-case variation" that is analyzed in this book, tertiary-level students were also the main source of the data that was gathered, and details of interview methods can be found below. Despite this focus on students, however, results can be assumed to reflect wider youth society in South Korea because the participation in tertiary education in South Korea is extraordinarily high, with an estimated 89 percent of young people under the age of twenty-five entering tertiary education in 2012 (OECD 2014, pp. 330–339).

South Korea is a democratic nation with a vibrant civil society where freedom of speech is generally valued and protected. However a National

Security Law (NSL), enacted in 1948, still remains in force. The NSL applies to those who engage in activities deemed to benefit the enemy (North Korea) such as spying or praising the North Korean regime. It is unlikely that the NSL influenced the responses to the questions asked, and questions were framed to avoid topics covered by NSL legislation. However, this background of anti-communism and the criminalizing of expressions of support toward the North should be borne in mind when considering responses to the questions posed. The NSL was mentioned by one young person only, who stated that he avoided speaking to North Korean immigrants in the South as he believed this to be illegal (it is not).

More relevant than the NSL are the social pressures around the topic of unification. Until the early 2000s opposing unification, or even showing disinterest or apathy about unification, would have been considered socially unacceptable. This research shows how much these social attitudes have shifted. Even so, for some young people it is still considered taboo to express disagreement with unification or show antagonism toward North Koreans. It might be expected, therefore, that responses in interviews may *understate* the negative attitudes toward unification and North Koreans. The conclusions in this book are all the more significant for that reason.

Similarly, discrimination towards both ethnic Korean and non-ethnic Korean immigrants is also considered socially unacceptable particularly among young people who have been exposed to concepts of multiculturalism and tolerance and anti-racism education. It might be expected, therefore, that expressions of support for non-ethnic and ethnic Korean immigrants in interviews may be *overestimated*. The fact that many young people were inclined to express strong negative sentiments toward ethnic Korean immigrants including North Koreans and *Joseonjok* is therefore particularly noteworthy.

Practical Considerations

Recruitment methods were designed to access a wide diversity of students and included: advertising on university websites; random approaches on campuses; attendance of student campus activities; interviews of university-age friends and acquaintances and their university-age siblings and friends; and introductions to students through academic colleagues. Male interviewees included those who had completed military service as well as those yet to attend. Interview response did not appear to have a relationship with experience of military service. With the exception of four interviews, all other interviews were carried out by the author in face-to-face settings. They took place in a variety of formats and places

dependent upon the manner of recruitment and included both group and one-to-one discussions. All interviewees were able to choose whether the interview took place in Korean or English and the majority were conducted in Korean. Explicit consent to participate in the research was obtained from all interviewees.

A breakdown by *university category* of the 159 students with whom interviews took place is as follows:

Elite [19 students]: Seoul National University, Pusan National University, Korea University, Yonsei University;
Top-tier [14 students]: Chung-Ang University, Seoul National University of Education, Sungkyunkwan University;
Mid-tier [46 students]: Dongguk University, Sookmyung Women's University, Incheon National University, Soongsil University, Myongji University;
Technical College [28 students]: Kimpo University, Chongshin University, Dongyang Mirae University, Wonkwang University;
Regional [45 students]: Chonnam National University, Handong Global University, Gyeongsang National University, Kyungpook (Gyeongbuk) National University, Korea National University of Education, Bugyeong University, Kyungsung University;
International [6 students]: Australian National University;
Other [1 student]: YBM Sisa.

These universities reflected a variety of religious affiliations and academic focus and included both single-sex and mixed-gender institutions. Breakdown by academic discipline of the 159 students interviewed is as follows:

Arts and Humanities 22 students;
Social Sciences 30 students;
Science and Engineering 30 students;
Business and Accounting 8 students;
Vocational Language 1 student;
Other 16 students.

The academic discipline studied by 52 students was not recorded. In total, 76 male and 83 female students were interviewed.

A further 23 'experts' were interviewed including schoolteachers, university student magazine and newspaper journalists, NGO activists and employees, academics, public policy specialists and an advertising executive. The research for this book took place during eight separate trips

to South Korea between March 2009 and September 2014 funded by a variety of institutions including the Korea Foundation, the Korean Studies Association of Australasia, the Australian National University, the Australia-Korea Foundation, and the Cheung-Kong Australia Endeavour Fellowship.

Defining Nationalism

Any analysis of this new nation and nationalism among South Korea's young people requires a definition of nationalism. Ernest Gellner's definition of nationalism is particularly helpful, with its separation of the tangible aspect of nationalism—when is a nation created—from the intangible element, which is nationalism as sentiment:

> Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.
> Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. 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. (Gellner 1983, p. 1)

Using this definition of nationalism, it is possible to explain that the division of the unified Korean national unit into two political units gave rise to nationalist sentiment or anger which inspired calls for unification among young people at the time. We will explore in the next section the history of Korean nationalism and why that particular expression of nationalist sentiment persisted for so long.

However, Brubaker warns us to expect evolution in the types of nationalism and national identity operating inside a society. This book is an examination of such an evolution taking place in South Korea. This evolution is revealing a contemporary South Korean nationalism for which the division of the unified Korean national unit no longer gives rise to the same levels of nationalist sentiment among young members of the new South Korean nation. Instead, these young people are increasingly comfortable with the current status-quo on the Korean peninsula. Their concept of the national unit, *uri nara,* is the territory of South Korea only, and this coincides with its representative political unit—the Republic of Korea and its government—which is democratically elected by popular vote. For the *isipdae*, their nation, the South Korean nation, is already established, and a sense of satisfaction with this South Korean nation can

be seen both in pride in the modernity of South Korea, and demand for South Korea to be accorded appropriate status in the international community. The significance of this change in the conception of the Korean nation, away from one based solely on ethnicity, is all the more apparent when it is examined within the historical context of discussions on South Korean nationalism.

A Brief History of Korean Nationalism

The writings of Shin Chaeho at the turn of the Nineteenth Century, in particular his *Doksa Sillon* (*A New Way of Reading History*), marked the beginning of the modern nationalist debate in Korea (Em 1999; Schmid 1997). In this work, Shin equated the history of Korea (*guksa* or national history) with the history of the nation (*minjoksa,* meaning the people's or nation's history). It was the first time "a history of the ethnic nation, rather than a dynastic history" (Em 1999, p. 289) had been written. Shin traced the formation of the Korean nation back to the mythical figure of *Dangun*, so-called Father of the Korean people, and to his birthplace in Northeast China from where *Dangun*'s people are said to have spread out both South onto the peninsula and North into China (Schmid 1997, p. 34). These discussions took place at a time when Korea was threatened by an array of foreign adversaries including an expansionist Japan. For Shin, the idea of ethnic homogeneity, and the Korean *minjok* or race as the basis of the Korean nation, was integral to his efforts to resist Japanese colonial ambition that based its claim to Korea, in part, on Koreans being part of a greater Japanese race. The subsequent dominance of ethnic nationalism in South Korea is rooted in the writings of Shin, and primordial analyses of the formation of the modern Korean nation remain prevalent in contemporary academic writing (Lankov 2006).[6]

There are, however, a number of scholars, among them Bruce Cumings, who provide an alternative to the primordial analysis of the roots of the Korean nation. Cumings challenges the myth of *Dangun* as the basis of the Korean nation,[7] and argues that formation was a modern event. He presents the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) as an agrarian state with a weak central administrative reach, similar to Gellner's pre-nationalist agrarian society. He describes Joseon's subjects as living inward-looking lives, tied to the locality by economic need, with the state's only interest being the extraction of taxes and maintaining the peace, and no interest in promoting any lateral communication between its subject communities.[8] Indeed, it is likely that the peasants of the Joseon dynasty would have cared little about any shared ethnic or cultural origin with the landowners who controlled their lives; rather, they were more

concerned by famine and destitution frequently brought on by the massive taxes levied against them. As Cumings (1997, p. 121) rightly explains, "what would a slave or a butcher care for the pride of the Yangban now shamed by Japan?"

The Japanese period of influence began in 1894 with a modernization and development plan for Korea known as the Kabo Reforms. Cumings (ibid., p. 120) calls this period "the birth of modern Korea." The Kabo reforms were sweeping reforms that affected many vital aspects of the administration, economy and society of Korea (K. Lee 1984, pp. 292–293; Eckert et al. 1990, p. 226). Reforms included the modernization of local government to remove its absolute authority over the local populace, the separation of the administration of justice from the executive, and a thorough rationalization of fiscal administration and taxation. Social reforms included the abolition of slavery, the removal of class distinctions, prohibition of child marriages, the establishment of a primary school system, and legislation against a variety of other malevolent social practices and conventions (Cumings 1997). Together, these were reforms that fundamentally altered the social, economic and administrative fabric of Korea.

Henry Em is another of the voices challenging the dominant primordialist nationalist historiography in South Korea. He also marks the colonial period as the crucial moment in the emergence of the Korean "nation" (*minjok*) (Em 1999, p. 284). Em argues that the period of Japanese colonialism was "constructive" in terms of the imagery created by both the colonizer and colonized. As Japanese policy tried to eradicate the Korean identity by closing Korean schools and forbidding the use of Korean language, they had to label people, cultures, and languages as "Korean." Thus for the first time, Koreans could imagine a community—a nation—in which they had an interest, although under the control of a foreign power (ibid., pp. 305–308).

The "imagining" of a wider community deepened among all classes of Koreans as they were forced to travel to find work or were transported by the Japanese to other parts of the peninsula, to Manchuria or to Japan, joining other "Korean" compatriots as forced labor. By the end of the period of Japanese rule, forced or coerced movement had affected as much as 40 percent of the adult population (Cumings 1997, p. 175). More generally, the arrival of the colonial era prompted many Koreans to become aware of their Korean identity. They recognized themselves as a common Korean population, albeit one that was repressed as the colonial subjects of Japan, and their sense of a national community was deepened by the presence of the colonizer. Indeed, Kim Ku, the renowned Korean nationalist and President of Korea under the Provisional Government of

the Republic of Korea following liberation in 1945, said that "until 1910, most adults did not even know what a nation was" (Wells 1990, p. 83).

In addition to a growing sense of the ethnic Korean nation, the colonial era resulted in many other types of nationalism developing in reaction to the challenges faced by the Korean peninsula under Japanese rule. In *New God New Nation: Protestants and Self-Reconstruction Nationalism in Korea 1896–1937,* Kenneth Wells explores the rise of a highly cultural conception of Korean nationalism during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. This Protestant-inspired nationalism was, as Wells terms it, reconstruction nationalism. Although not denying the nation-state ideal, it separated the nation from the state, believing that individual culture and self-improvement through work and education, for example, were the most important elements of forming a strong nation (Wells, 1990). Michael Robinson describes the rise of a similar nationalism in the early 1920s, which he calls a "cultural nationalism," in response to the colonial authorities. Cultural nationalism in this period sought to work within the constraints of the colonial system to create "a gradual program of reform, education, and economic development to lay the base for future independence" (Robinson 1988, p. 158). It was a movement that attempted to build a nation without directly confronting Japanese authority (ibid., p. 163). However, while the programs of the cultural nationalists were able to survive the control and censorship of the colonial government, the movement failed to gain wider support against the background of more appealing radical nationalist and socialist movements of the time (ibid., p. 166).

Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, the Korean peninsula was divided under the occupation of the United States in the South and the USSR in the North. The first civilian government in the South was led by Rhee Syngman from 1948 to 1960 and his government relied on ethnic nationalism in the form of an anti-Japanese, pro-independence sentiment, to achieve Rhee's goals of legitimizing his rule and maintaining power (Cheong 1992). Rhee also used ethnic nationalism and the popular sentiment that it inspired to oppose and manage the actions of the occupying U.S. forces to suit his aims (ibid.). Most notably, however, was the role of ethnic nationalism as a driver of the Korean War. Shin Gi-wook (2006) argues that the Korean War (1950–1953) was inspired not by ideology but by the strong sense of ethnic nationalism that existed on the peninsula and its influence on the Rhee government. Shin writes that "territorial partition on top of a strong sense of ethnic homogeneity produced irresistible pressure to recover lost national unity, which is a key factor in understanding … the Korean War" (Shin 2006, p. 152).

Park Chung Hee, who deposed Rhee's successor as leader of South Korea, put less emphasis upon explicit ethnic nationalism (not least because he had been a member of the Japanese Imperial Army) and required the support of the United States and Japan to achieve his many development goals. Nevertheless, the Park Chung Hee era (1961–1979) was a period marked by the effective use of nationalism to legitimize and mobilize. Kim Hyung-a (2003) describes how Park's coup was justified by the regime and its supporters "as an act of 'patriotism' to save the nation from crisis" created by student protest and general unrest. Indeed, throughout Park's regime, nation and nationalism remained a key theme to legitimize his government and to justify development plans that placed a heavy burden upon South Korea's working populace. In the early 1970s, when his economic miracle was slowing and his popularity waning, Park advanced his Heavy Chemical Industrialization (HCI) plan for Korea and imposed the highly repressive *Yusin* constitution which curbed political opposition. However, in an attempt to legitimate his increasingly authoritarian rule, Park introduced a policy of *jaju* ("self-strengthening") and the promotion of Korean cultural traditions. This held great appeal for some Korean people and, alongside the brutal use of force, it helped to consolidate Park's *Yusin* policy. This nationalism attached to the *Yusin* policy was also aimed at mobilizing the population and economy for a greater assertion of military autonomy following U.S. President Nixon's détente with China, the withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam and, later on, President Carter's discussions of military withdrawal from Korea (Koh 1984; H. Kim 2004).

Chun Doo Hwan's regime (1980–1988) had even greater problems of legitimacy having come to power through a coup at a time when the Korean people had a strong expectation of democracy. Soon after taking power, he brutally suppressed an opposition movement in the Korean city of Gwangju. This incident led to many hundreds of deaths and disappearances and came to be known as the Gwangju massacre. Chun, however, was still able to secure his position of President of Korea for a total of seven years achieved partly through good management of the economy (Chun mostly left the running of the economy to a talented team of bureaucrats), but mainly through the fierce suppression of opposition and by his effective use of nationalism. Chun's nationalism exploited the continued perceptions of threat from North Korea, hatred of communism and populist sentiment surrounding unification (Bleiker 2005, p. 67).

Although not explicit in rhetoric and nature, the regimes of both Park and Chun employed what was essentially an ethnic nationalism. Park's regime "identified 'national security' and 'development' as the main tasks that the nation faced, and his actions were carried out in the name of the

nation, national unity, or modernization of the Fatherland" (Shin 2006, p. 167). Chun followed a similar discursive pattern as he bid for legitimacy by committing to rid the nation of corruption and promising a future of economic growth for the people of South Korea (Eckert et al. 1990, p. 376). Following democratization in 1987, ethnic nationalism continued to play an important role in Korean society. Some positive mobilizations of ethnic nationalism were reflected in the huge public support for the successful 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. It was also used in attempts by Presidents Roh Tae-woo, Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung to warm ties with the North. Throughout the 1990s, liberalizing policies such as the opening of domestic markets to foreign competition were rejected, in part to avoid offending the ethnic nationalist sentiments of the Korean voters. It was argued by some that by exposing the *jaebol* to increased competition, these policies of economic liberalization would have forced them to become more efficient. It is also argued that had those policies been adopted, South Korea could have avoided some of the worst excesses that contributed to the economic crisis it suffered during the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 (Clifford 1998, pp. 336–337; Kong 2000, p. 22).

Opposition to the Park and the Chun regimes, as well as broader civil society movements, have also relied heavily on nationalism for motivation and justification. Its nationalism focused on anti-American and anti-imperialist motifs, as well as ethnic nationalism, to underline the need for unification with the North. This is discussed at length in the following chapter.

Current Discussions of Korean Nationalism

Shin Gi-wook's *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea*, published in 2006, remains the most recent and comprehensive review of nationalism in Korea. Shin details a Korean nationalist discourse that is primarily discussed in terms of ethnicity and blood ties (ibid.). He writes of historical processes in the development of the Korean nation "by which race, ethnicity, and nation come to be conflated in Korea to produce a strong sense of oneness based on shared bloodline and ancestry" (ibid., p. 223). This ethnic nationalism, argues Shin, continues to drive desire for unification with the North, although he points out that this is stronger among older people than younger people (ibid., pp. 198–199). Shin also posits that globalization has intensified this ethnic national identity in South Korea suggesting that ethnic and national solidarity, based upon blood ties and shared history, is the reaction to the cultural and social disruption brought on by modernization and globalization (ibid., p. 214). This follows the work of

Anthony Smith who argues that "if anything, globalizing pressures have, through large-scale migration and mass communications, revitalized ethnic ties and sentiments across the globe" (Smith 2008, p. 118).

However, a number of authors have pointed to the increasingly pragmatic nature of nationalist sentiment in South Korea. Lee Sook-jong (2006) asserts that young people in South Korea continue to have a shared ethnic identity with those in the North, but suggests that this ethnic sentiment has weakened and is no longer strong enough "to guarantee their willingness to pay the huge expected costs" of immediate unification. Instead, young people prefer a very gradual unification that would minimize the costs of unification to South Korean society. Similarly, Kim Byung-ro (2007) argues that young people identify themselves with the whole of Korea but have a very practical and pragmatic, even conservative, approach to expressing nationalism in regards to North Korea and unification. While these analyses briefly recognize a growing ambivalence toward unification, they fail to examine the root causes of these changing attitudes to North Korea and the event of unification.

Katherine Moon (2003), in her chapter "Korean nationalism, Anti-Americanism, and democratic consolidation," charts the anti-American movement as democracy has developed in South Korea. While not denying the persistence of nationalist sentiment, she shows how the anti-American movement has replaced grand narratives of anti-imperialism and unification with democratic concepts including human rights, labor rights, environmentalism and the rule of law. Thus with the demise of authoritarian government and the rise of democracy, a national identity based on anti-authoritarianism, anti-imperialism and anti-Americanism is no longer required (ibid.). Other authors highlight the growing tendency of young people, and Koreans more generally, to find more benign "ethnic" expressions of nationalism, for example through pride in sports (Shin 2006) or with culture such as *Hallyu*, the so-called Korean Wave (S. Lee 2006). Chung and Choe (2008) remark that even though young people fought bitterly in the 1980s and 1990s for democratic and social justice in South Korea, during more recent times, culture, history and science and technology inspire much greater national pride than, for example, politics and social welfare.

With the advent of democracy, however, competing politics and policies inevitably become a source of dispute. As politics has become increasingly contentious in South Korea, Hahm Chaibong (2005) writes of the polarization of nationalism. He points to the rise of what he calls a leftist-nationalism that he defines as a populist anti-American, pro-North Korean sentiment. This manifests itself, he argues, as antipathy toward

economic globalization, increased self-confidence vis-à-vis the relationship with the United States, and a proactive view toward engagement with North Korea. Hahm (2006) also compares the current nationalism on the right and left to the Confucian period. At this time, the debate converged around the opposition between *gaeguk* (opening the nation to international influence) and *swaeguk* (efforts to try to build domestically without external influence). He argues that this represents the dichotomy between the pragmatic nationalism of the right in Korea and the more inward looking nationalism of the left.

Some academics are now considering alternatives to "ethnic" nationalism to categorize nationalist sentiment in Korea. With more than 1.5 million foreigners in South Korea, increasing academic attention is being paid to the multicultural nature of South Korean society to discover how immigration into Korea is being addressed by society and elites (Choe 2007). Many scholars argue, however, that the rhetoric of multiculturalism is no more than surface deep and that a strong ethnic nationalism remains. As a result, multiculturalism is not being effectively translated into substantive action that can help to include new immigrants within the national unit (Kong, Yoon and Yu 2010; G. Han 2007; A. Kim 2009; Bélanger, Lee and Wang 2010).

Han Kyung-ku (2007) argues that Korean nationalism is instead based on a sense of cultural superiority stemming from historical Korea, and that this (rather than race) is the basis of discrimination against others. Han reminds us that differentiation on the basis of culture might lead to as much discrimination as differentiation on the grounds of race, but his thesis is essentially no different from an ethnic "type" of nationalism. His focus remains on discrimination against non-ethnic Koreans, and thus adds little to the debate on new South Korean nationalism and national identity.

Postmodern critiques of Korean nationalism are also emerging alongside these more traditional analyses. In the face of globalization, Kim Kyong Ju (2006, p. 161), for example, posits the construction of "polymorphous" or "amorphous" identities, which are leading to "a highly differentiated society." Sheila Myoshi Jager (1996, 2003), meanwhile, provides a feminist analysis of the process of nation building in Korea. Analyzing discourse around unification, economic development, and opposition to authoritarianism, she shows how many of these processes constructed and reinforced ideas of patriarchy and conservative views on sexuality and gender in Korean society. These post-nationalist analyses provide an understanding of identity and community that are based on new ties such as gender, sexuality and class rather than on the ties of national units and nations.

There is also a growing body of work on identity that focuses on the experiences of new *ethnic Korean* immigrants. The "hierarchical nation" proposed by Seol and Skrentny (2009) describes the establishment of a hierarchy of ethnic Koreans within South Korea. In this hierarchy, educated Korean-Americans are placed at the top while North Korean immigrants find themselves firmly at the bottom. A number of other authors have written about the difficulties faced by North Koreans in maintaining their identity while struggling to find a place in the South Korean nation and society (Y. Kim 2009; B. Chung 2008). Although exploration of the respective experiences of ethnic Korean and non-ethnic Korean migrants in the South can be highly enlightening, most literature on the topic of migration, identity, unification or nationalism in Korea tends to address *either* the issue of ethnic Korean immigration (e.g. Seol and Skrentny 2009) *or* non-ethnic Korean immigration (e.g. A. Kim 2009). With the exception of Nora Hui-jung Kim (2008), few give attention to what she terms the "political liberals' dilemma": how to deal with both ethnic and non-ethnic Korean immigration in a just and equal manner. Nora Kim presents a sense of obligation to include ethnic Korean arrivals as equals in the South Korean nation, particularly those from China and North Korea. However such ethnic-based policies, no matter how well intentioned, contradict the goal of including other, non-ethnic Korean, immigrants in the South Korean nation on a non-discriminatory basis. Kim's work highlights the importance of looking at nationalism, identity and immigration in South Korea through a wider lens so as to include both non-ethnic and ethnic Korean arrivals in any one analysis. This book does just that. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of nationalism in South Korea, and the implications of this nationalism for all those living in South Korea.

Many of the available alternatives to an analysis based on ethnic nationalism are, however, unsatisfactory. Although too many scholars still cling to an ethnic understanding of the Korean nation, other analyses turn too easily to multiculturalism, almost as a ready-made alternative to the ethnic nation, without demanding a more complex analysis of South Korean society. Postmodern analyses provide challenging alternatives to the traditional ethnic suppositions, but they fail to describe and explain the explicit nationalism that continues to exist among the vast majority of South Koreans, not least its youth. The approach of this book differs from much of the existing literature by focusing specifically on young people and by addressing the complexity of South Korean society through its examination of the attitude of South Korean youth towards, and their relationship with, both non-ethnic and ethnic Koreans. It does this by detailing the emergence of a new South Korean nationalism among young

people and its globalized cultural characteristics. This shift has resulted in the apparent paradox of some groups of ethnic Koreans—North Koreans and Korean-Chinese (*Joseonjok)*, for example—finding that they are excluded from the South Korean national community, while some non-ethnic Korean immigrants who meet the demands of this new globalized cultural nationalism are readily "imagined" by many young people as members of the South Korean national community.

The findings of this book, therefore, have implications for the conceptual understanding of identity in Korea as well as practical significance in areas such as immigration and education policy. Further, the emergence of globalized cultural nationalism also holds comparative value for understanding the evolution of nationalism in other communities and countries. Most fundamentally, however, the research findings presented here challenge the basic premise of Korean unification: the reuniting of the divided ethnic Korean nation.

Chapter Outlines

The next chapter, Chapter 2, provides the detailed historical context for the research behind this book. It uses key moments in the history of the Korean student movement, from the colonial period (1910–1945) until the early 1990s, to demonstrate its nationalist nature. Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate the existence of this new South Korean nationalism and describe its globalized cultural nature. Chapters 5 and 6 then uses constructivist and instrumentalist analyses to examine the rise and acceptance of this new nationalism, and the shaping of its manifestations and characteristics. Chapter 7 discusses the consequences of the rise of a globalized cultural nationalism for Korean society and Chapter 8 summarizes the findings and highlights the very substantial policy issues that arise from them.

Notes

1. In 2014 only South Korea participated in the FIFA World Cup.
2. The author watched the North Korea versus Portugal game on one of the giant screens set up along the banks of the Han River in Seoul. At the beginning of the game there were just a handful of people watching with the author. Audience numbers did increase throughout the game but this was by chance as people on their evening stroll stopped and joined the small crowd gathered in front of the screen.
3. The term *isipdae*, or twenty-somethings, was coined in the late 2000s and refers to the current generation of young people who are in their twenties.

4. The terms "primordialist," "constructivist" and "instrumentalist" are used as proposed by Crawford Young (1993). Young writes about these terms in relation to the rise in cultural pluralism and conflict within nations. Although Young's focus is on changes to identities within multi-ethnic societies, his categorization is useful for discussing the causal theories of nationalism.

5. Brubaker and Brown both argue against the "bad" ethnic and "good" civic distinction and labels. Brubaker argues that this characterization is unhelpful as individual civic or ethnic nationalisms may vastly differ depending on how they are manifested and expressed in their respective nations (Brubaker 1998). Brown argues that both types have the possibility to be either liberal or illiberal, depending upon the origins of the civic or ethnic nationalism: nationalism which is "reactive in origin and which is articulated by a marginalized group, is more likely to emerge in an illiberal form; but such illiberalism is not fixed, since it depends upon how nationalist elites portray the nation's enemies" (Brown 2000).

6. Lankov (2006) describes the role of this ethnic-based nationalist historiography in the pursuance of issues including so-called "historical sovereignty" over Goguryeo. The Goguryeo dynasty was one of the most successful dynasties in the history of the Northeast Asian region. Korea's historical sovereignty over Goguryeo is disputed by China as the ancient Goguryeo dynasty covered a large section of modern day Northeast China. Encouraged by a number of domestic and nationalist considerations, both China and Korea seek to claim Goguryeo as their own national history.

7. Cumings (1997, p. 25) writes in regard to the *Dangun* myth: "Korea is indeed one of the most homogeneous nations on earth, where ethnicity and nationality coincide. It is pleasant for Koreans to think they were always that way; it is a dire mistake to think that this relative homogeneity signifies a common "bloodline" or imbues all Koreans with similar characteristics."

8. Cumings (1997, p. 73) writes that "Korea's agrarian bureaucracy was superficially strong but actually rather weak at the center. The state ostensibly dominated the society, but in practice landed aristocratic families could keep the state at bay and perpetuate their local power for centuries." For the average citizen of Joseon, their experience of "Korea" therefore, would extend no further than their immediate environment and possibly to the agents of landowners collecting taxes, with a huge population of slaves and very low castes in trades such as butchery and leather, who were again separated from other parts of society by lateral divisions (K. Lee 1984, pp. 184–188).