

MAIN CURRENTS IN THEORIES
OF NATIONALISM

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This paper offers a macroscopic review of main currents in studies of nationalism. My review begins with two historians, Carlton Hayes and Hans Kohn, who laid the foundation for social scientific studies of nationalism. Then my review proceeds to two main currents in sociological theories of nationalism: structuralist and Weberian. The paper concludes with a brief reference to the present Japanese situation in the light of the theories reviewed, and to the suggestion for future research on it.

Historians' Typology of Nationalism

Before the sociological study of nationalism saw its renaissance in the last two decades, the problem of nationalism was mainly dealt with by historians (Hayes 1926, Kohn 1944, Shafer 1972, Snyder 1976)¹. Although historians' works were primarily concerned with typology rather than theory of nationalism, I begin with the two most important figures in the field, Hayes and Kohn. There are two reasons why it is important to discern their implicit concerns, from which their interests in nationalism stemmed and by which their framings of questions were shaped. First, these concerns are possibly still flowing in the undercurrent of the ongoing studies of nationalism. Second, people in society like Japan, where a nationalist frame of mind deeply permeates, might find it difficult to identify themselves with their concerns at once.

Carlton Hayes, the father of scholarly study of nationalism, in 1926 described historical variation in nationalism before World War

II. Hayes distinguished five varieties of modern nationalism: humanitarian nationalism, traditional nationalism, Jacobin nationalism, liberal nationalism, and integral nationalism. When the first variety, humanitarian nationalism, emerged in the midst of the dynastic and colonial wars of the eighteenth century, nationalism was seen as a stepping-stone to a humanitarian world, influenced by the intellectual development of the Enlightenment. This first form of nationalism was taken over by three different intellectual traditions and evolved into different kinds of nationalism. National patriotism for the sake of liberty in Jean Jacques Rousseau's theory of humanitarian democratic nationalism was reversed as liberty for the sake of national patriotism in Jacobin nationalism. With the transvaluation, "the people" became the absolute entity "nation," in which the will of the nation was god. Traditional nationalism then arose in reaction to Jacobin nationalism, and thus appeared to be the antithesis of the Jacobin democratic extreme. Combined with the aristocratic tradition, traditional nationalism emphasized order, stability, and hierarchy of values and loyalties. Liberal nationalism, on the other hand, was affiliated with Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism in that anything including the popular will should be judged by his utilitarian principle of "the greatest good of the greatest number." Liberty, based on trust in the ability of each individual to develop the greatest possible virtue and happiness, is guaranteed in the framework of the free-trade economy and the small government. When integral nationalism took over the three immediate successors of humanitarian nationalism, nationalism ceased to be a stepping-stone to a new world order and became an end in itself. It arose in nationalities which had already gained independence and political unity. Hayes's work, written before World War II, was a tragic prophecy of the outcome of integral nationalism.

Hans Kohn's classification (1944 and elsewhere) divided nationalism into the Western type and the other type. The Western type included such countries as England, the U.S., France, and Switzerland.

For the other type of nationalism, Kohn gave such examples as Germany, Russia, Italy and Japan. The criterion of Kohn's division was whether or not nationalism was "linked with individual liberty and rational cosmopolitanism."² "The difference in the character of nationalism in western Europe and elsewhere" was explained "by the fact that the growth to nationhood in England and France was to a large extent a process of internal or immanent growth, a product of indigenous social and political forces, whereas nationalism in central and eastern Europe and in Asia began its development under outside influence."³ While this paradigm and its explicit moral evaluation⁴ projected the conventional modernization theory which dominated the U.S. during the middle of the century, Kohn shared basically the same concern as Hayes.

Among the numerous classifications of nationalism proposed by historians, those of Hayes and Kohn are the best known. Writings of nationalists and also of theorists of nationalism in history were surveyed and analyzed by Louis Snyder, from a historian's perspective. This 1976 survey marks the end of an epoch of historical study of nationalism. About the same time, sociological inquiry into nationalism appeared and has continued to date (Hechter 1975, Nairn 1977, Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983 and Greenfeld 1992).

Sociological Theories of Nationalism: Structuralists

While historians are mainly concerned with historical varieties of nationalism and their typology, sociologists concern themselves in explaining the causal relationship between nationalism and aspects of modernity. There are two main currents in the theories of nationalism which attempt to explain why the modern time is the age of nationalism. First I present conventional theories of nationalism. Sociological analyses of nationalism, so far, have typically focused on structural factors. One variant sees some structural aspects of modernity as the cause of nationalism. Then there is another variant within structuralistic theories: nationalism is seen

as a functional prerequisite to modernity.

Michael Hechter, in his 1975 study of national development, criticized "diffusionists" such as Geertz or K. Deutsch, and proposed an alternative theory of "internal colonialism," which was built upon the theories of Lenin and Gramsci. Hechter defined national development as a process in which the "core and peripheral cultures... merge into one all-encompassing cultural system to which all members of the society have primary identification and loyalty."⁵ According to the diffusion model, national development is supposed to have resulted from the interaction of core and periphery. According to the internal colonialism model, the interaction between core and periphery, in turn, results in the persistence or strengthening of ethnic solidarity, as long as it is underway in the context of the cultural division of labor. Although his 1975 "internal colonialism" theory of nationalism explicitly belonged to structuralism, Hechter later changed his position⁶.

Whereas Hechter dealt with "national development" and "ethnic solidarity" as the integration or disintegration processes of a society resulting from the cultural division of labor within the society, Tom Nairn emphasized the limits of "the empiricism of the nation-by-nation approach."⁷ Nairn assumed the task undertaken by Immanuel Wallerstein⁸ and Perry Anderson,⁹ and contended that the world political economy, namely the general historical process of uneven development, was responsible for the rise of nationalism. While Nairn extended the perspective to take the world-system factor into account, the formula he used to explain the formation of nationalism was also structuralistic. Nationalism, according to Nairn, is an ideological product of the world structural force of capitalism. Uneven development, a necessary consequence of capitalism, created nationalism in the periphery. The first nationalism was formulated in Europe, as a result of uneven development within Europe, in the "march-lands and the countryside." The most potent versions of all, however, were to be found "in nationalities which to some

degree combined both factors: a painful experience and fear of 'under-development', and modern socio-economic institutions enabling them to mobilize and indoctrinate their masses effectively" such as Germany, Italy and Japan. When those countries caught up with the core-areas in the later nineteenth century and "emerged into the extra-rapid industrialization made possible by their 'revolutions from above', England and France then developed their own forms of 'nationalism'." In this way, "core-area nationalism was, in the long run, as inevitable as peripheral nationalism."¹⁰ Nairn, a prominent Marxist scholar, acknowledged that nationalism was not merely manifestations of economic trends but rather "a real force"¹¹ in history, thus his materialism in this sense avoided a mechanistic explanation.

Whereas Nairn considered nationalism first of all a phenomenon of the periphery, Ernest Gellner considered it a phenomenon of industrialized society.¹² Despite this difference, Gellner's theory of nationalism also falls into structuralism. According to Gellner, nationalism accompanies industrialization because it is a necessary consequence of the functional prerequisites of industrialization. Industrialization, which needs a broad social base of mobility, tries to utilize education and mass media to make an extended circle of people interchangeable. Gellner's explanation of nationalism as an effect of that process took the mode of functionalistic explanation.

While these authors saw nationalism as an uniform phenomenon which arose through the same structural forces around the world, Benedict Anderson distinguished four different types of nationalism: creole nationalism, vernacular nationalism, official nationalism and the last wave of nationalism.¹³ Anderson treated nationalism as a module. Once the module came into being as its first variant, creole nationalism, in the American continents, it was copied and adapted in other places with only some aspects of it remaining intact. Creole nationalism of American ex-colonies was formed on the basis of the administrative unit of the colonial period because

the idea of imagined community came to be shared through the European languages-of-state. Vernacular nationalism in Europe was characterized by its populism, and official nationalism in such countries as Russia and Japan by "Russifying" policy-orientation. The last wave of nationalism in the post-World War II period adapted these facets from each: the administrative unit of the colonial period, populism, and "Russifying" policy-orientation. Although these differences were explained by occupations and language of bearers of nationalism, why nationalism as a module spread all over the world remains to be answered. Anderson explained it in a functionalistic fashion. The cultural roots of nationalism lay at the deepest area of human minds, which was previously occupied by the cultural system of the religious community and then that of the dynastic realm. Those systems used to be taken for granted as frames of reference, just as nationality is today. As the previous cultural systems broke down, the search for the new began. "Nothing perhaps more precipitated this search, nor made it more fruitful, than print-capitalism," Anderson argued¹⁴. Nationalism spread throughout the world because it was needed as a substitute for religion and dynastic rule, in order to fill the void created by capitalism.

Sociological Theories of Nationalism: a Weberian Approach, a New Thesis

Although there are variants in the way they explain the link between nationalism and modernity, the scholars cited above all belong to structuralists because they view nationalism as the inevitable consequence or accompaniment of structural aspects of modernity. Structuralistic approaches implicitly assume a reflection theory of human perception and emphasize some hidden universal structure of human mind. A new theory of nationalism by Liah Greenfeld¹⁵, on the other hand, takes a Weberian approach, in that social phenomenon such as nationalism does not inevitably result from objec-

tive structural conditions. To understand nationalism sociologically, this approach requires to examine not only structural conditions under which nationalism happened to emerge and spread but also socially constructed conceptual lenses, without which people cannot grasp the world meaningfully. Although this approach puts emphasis on the data of subjective meanings, it is by no means idealist. To bridge the effects of structural and cultural factors, Greenfeld utilized such theoretical apparatus as status-inconsistency, identity crisis, *ressentiment*, and the transvaluation of values. The direction of the transvaluation, the human creativity, is ultimately irreducible to situation, thus is not totally predicatable. The type of sociological explanation which results from this approach does not rely on universal laws. A methodological consequence of the Weberian approach is methodological individualism: concrete situations and subjective meanings of specific individuals, the bearers of the sociological object of the study, should be investigated.

Aside from the difference in approach, the most striking was the result obtained by Greenfeld. Her examination of historical data turned out to be a serious challenge to the conventional thesis about the relationship between nationalism and modernity. It demonstrated that the genesis of nationalism was found in sixteenth-century England before the dawn of industrialization. That means it refuted the sociological theses discussed above. The historical evidences brought into light by Greenfeld called for reconsideration of Nairn's theory that nationalism arose in periphery as a result of uneven development of capitalism, Gellner's theory that nationalism resulted from the development of functional prerequisites of industrialization, and Anderson's theory that nationalism originated in eighteenth-century America and was popularized under the primacy of capitalism. Based on the analysis of subjective meanings in primary sources, Greenfeld went on to say that nationalism not only preceded the other aspects of modernization but preconditioned these processes. The nationalist style of thought was the driving

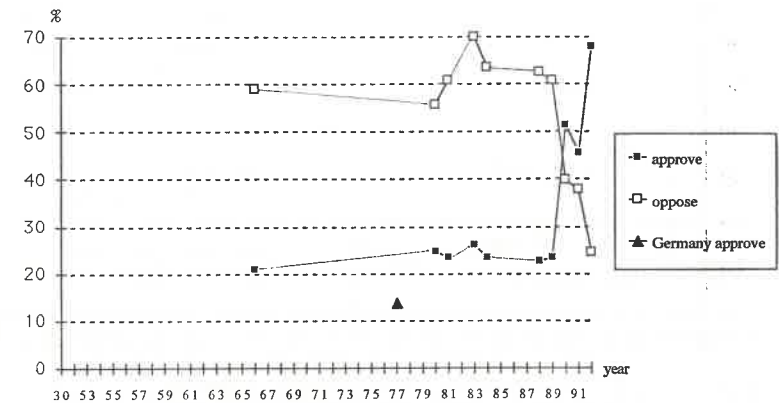
force behind the social transformation, thus nationalism is the constitutive element of all aspects of modernization.

A Brief Reference to the Present Japanese Situation

Japan, at the moment, might benefit from the cultural division of labor but certainly is not situated in an economically repressed position in it. Nor is economically underdeveloped in the framework of world-scale uneven development. Nor has functional needs for modernization. Since such are the structural situations, structural theories predict Japanese nationalism now is in the phase of erosion. Mattei Dogan, who himself developed evolutionistic theory of nationalism¹⁶ unlike the structuralists described above, suggested the same prediction for Japanese nationalism, and he tried to support his thesis with corresponding public opinion survey results¹⁷.

Is Japanese nationalism in decline according to Dogan's data? The degree of confidence in one's national army and the willingness to fight for one's country were among the five indicators of nationalism with which Dogan tried to demonstrate the general trend of decline of nationalism in "mature nations." The both indicators showed Japan ranked at the bottom, namely, was the least nationalistic¹⁸. However, if he had traced back these indicators, the people in the earlier postwar Japan would probably have been less nationalistic than those in the present Japan. Until recently few people would have disagreed to a passage from New York Times, which said postwar military restraints had become the core of the country's self-image¹⁹. Yet, public opinion over sending the Self Defense Forces abroad on U.N. missions, which I collected from several sources, has shown a rapid change in recent years (Figure 1). The "approve"- "oppose" ratio was reversed. Nationalism is not fading at the moment. Rather, it is most likely that behind this transformation in public opinion lies a rising new nationalism, which took over the previous core of national identity,

Figure 1. Change in Japanese Public Opinion about Sending SDF on U.N. missions



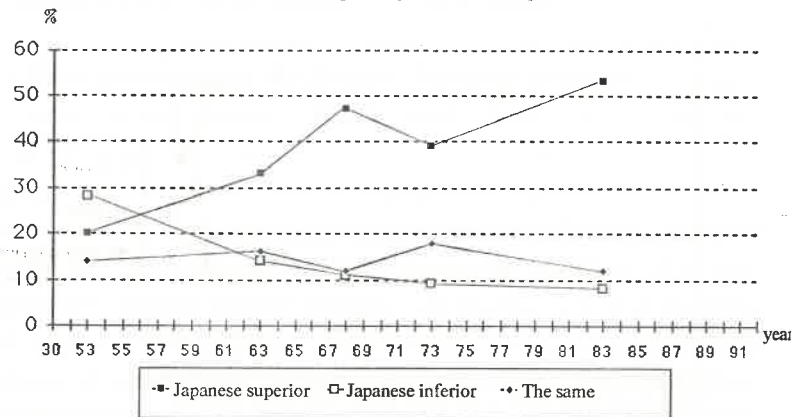
Sources: 1966, 1981, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992 Yomiuri Shimbun; 1980 The Kyodo News Service 1983 Mainichi Shimbun; 1989, 1991 Prime Minister's Office

namely, postwar military restraints.

In fact the current Japanese situation provides a good opportunity to investigate an under-examined area in the studies of nationalism, namely, changing processes of national identity in a society. Whether in Kohn's classification or Greenfeld's, Japanese traditional national identity offered a good example of the type which emphasized the unique character of the nation. In Greenfeld's words, it belonged to "particularistic" nationalism. Now Japanese national identity is striving for universalism or the international recognition of some universalistic aspects. It is transforming from that of a late developer to that of a superpower. Some regard this process as a part of hegemony-seeking efforts, and label it "neo-nationalism."

One plausible explanation for the rise of the new nationalism in Japan from a structuralistic perspective may be that of Nairn's. As long as there is uneven development of modern capitalism in the world, there will always be nationalism, even in developed countries as a reaction to catching-up countries. However, it is Greenfeld's theoretical apparatus that I find most useful. Rising expectation

Figure 2. Sense of National Superiority to Western People



*Answers vary with time but not by age.

Source: The Institute of Statistical Mathematics "The Study of Japanese National Character"

associated with the rising sense of national superiority (Figure 2) has resulted in a paranoid feeling of international undervaluation and perceived status-inconsistency. Structural forces are of course important factors contributing to the transformation of the nature of nationalism. Economic success contributed to the rising sense of superiority; political inability contributed to the sense of powerlessness in the international world. Yet, *ressentiment* triggered by these structural conditions does not get into shape until it is guided by concrete ideas. Nationalism behind such internationalistic policies as participating in international peacekeeping activities and integrating Asian nations into a supra-national block can be either reactionary in nature or transvaluated to such an extent as to transcend nationalism itself. Now we are back to the concern from which the social scientific studies of nationalism were initiated in the first place: is the present Japanese nationalism an end in itself or a stepping-stone to a humanitarian world, as the slogan "international contribution" suggests? Since the ideas which guide nationalism are also formed through social/historical conditions, only the task

of examining the social backgrounds and driving forces of the producers of ideologies would offer an intellectually apprehensible answer to the question.

Notes

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- Ibid. pp. 23-24
- For example, the moral evaluation is seen in the following expressions: "there were many wiser men than Michelet or Mazzini, Treitschke or Dostoevsky; only Mill can really be called wise" (*Prophets and Peoples*, MacMillan, 1946, p.3)
- "Mill, Michelet and Mazzini, though not Treitschke or Dostoevsky, were good Europeans." (ibid. p.8)
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- Ibid. p. 358
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- Dogan argues that nations, like individuals, have different ages and mature nations are bound to be post-nationalistic.

- 17 Dogan, Mattei. "The Decline of Nationalism within Western Europe," a paper presented to the International Sociological Association's meeting in Tokyo, 1992
- 18 "Among all advanced democracies, Japan appears to be the most anti-militaristic" p.19; "Today, Japan seems to be the most defeatist among the advanced democracies" p.23 in *ibid.*
- 19 New York Times, May 5, 1992