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One Nation, One Race:

An Analysis of Nationalist Influence on Japanese Human Rights Policy

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An Honors Thesis Submitted to the International Studies Department at

Macalester College, Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA

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Abstract

Nationalism has continued to be prevalent in Japanese society, the legacy of Japan's period of modernization. This thesis examines the relationship between nationalism and human rights in Japanese policy, focusing on the question, "How do nationalist organizations in Japan influence government policies related to human rights?" It begins with a historical analysis in order to determine the remaining influence of nationalism in Japanese society at large, before determining the direct influence nationalism, through nationalist organizations and individuals, influence Japan's laws and policies. I argue that much of Japan's policy making is influenced by the nationalist movement, and as result, human rights have not been fully realized in Japan.

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Introduction

In an August 2018 press conference with Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, UN Secretary General António Guterres stated, "I want to express my deep gratitude for Japanese leadership in disarmament, but also in relation to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in the fight against climate change, in the promotion of human rights, and in all aspects of UN activities."¹ Indeed, Japan has maintained an active role in the UN over the past decades, and has risen to prominence as a liberal democracy and one of the world's largest economies. It has repeatedly stated its commitment to strengthening human rights and democracy both domestically and abroad. However, Japan's rhetoric on human rights often does not line up with its actions. Numerous UN reports have demonstrated Japan's shortcomings in human rights, highlighting the conditions facing minorities and the lack of any national human rights institutions. Internationally, besides its inadequate responses to its war crimes during World War II, Japan also deals freely with states known to abuse human rights, and resists international pressure to punish them. In many cases, Japan has resisted addressing these issues, at times refusing to acknowledge them. Part of the explanation for this lies in Japan's nationalist past and its legacy in the present-day.

Japanese nationalism grew out of Japan's modernization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Initially, nationalism was the state's tool to centralize power and

¹ Guterres, António. "Opening Remarks at Press Conference with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan Secretary-General." United Nations. August 8, 2018. <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-08-08/remarks-press-conference-prime-minister-shinzo-abe>.

drive Japan's development and modernization. Eventually, nationalist ideologies became so ingrained within Japanese national consciousness that they were tied to the Japanese identity. The corresponding imperial expansion eventually culminated in Japan's invasion of China in the 1930s and broader invasion of East and Southeast Asia and war with the United States in the early 1940s. Japan's defeat and subsequent occupation by the U.S. cemented Japan's place in the post-war international order as a liberal democracy aligned with the U.S. However, nationalist ideologies remain part of Japanese societal beliefs, which are perpetuated by modern nationalist organizations, most notably Nippon Kaigi, and the politicians that belong to them. The deep connections between political officials and nationalist organizations and the prominence of nationalist responses to human rights issues are what prompted my main research question: How do nationalist organizations in Japan influence government policies related to human rights?

Of course, human rights and nationalism are both larger than individuals and organizations, and society plays a large role in legitimizing both of them. At the same time, the power of individuals and organizations to influence society cannot be ignored. As such, it is the interplay between ideologies and society that needs to be studied in order to determine why policies are created the way they are. I also researched a number of broader guiding questions in order to understand the context for nationalist organizations' behaviors and beliefs: How does nationalism manifest in Japanese society today? What are the goals of contemporary nationalists? What are the methods Japanese nationalists use to push their agenda? To what degree does Japanese society inform nationalism and government policies, or vice versa? What parts of human rights are

widely accepted in Japan, and which are not, and why? This thesis will answer some of these questions in more detail than others, but they all address important factors in Japanese society that affect nationalist movements, and contribute to the answer to my main research question.

As a member of the G20, a significant ally of the United States, and an important regional actor in Asia, Japan occupies roles in multiple political contexts, all of which are related to its domestic politics. As a liberal democracy, Japan's politics can change after any given election. That being said, Japan's government has been under almost exclusive control by the currently ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) since 1955, aside two brief periods of time in the early 1990s and late 2000s. The nationalist wing of the party has always held significant sway, due to the party's organization of policy-making, and leads the party under the current Abe administration. As a result, much of Japanese politics can be tied to the LDP's politics, which has been influenced by nationalism for the past six decades. Japan's relationships with its East Asian neighbors, still influenced heavily by the memory of World War II, is also impacted by the nationalists in prominent government positions, which often undermines attempts at reconciliation and relationship-building. Indeed, Japanese nationalists often serve as roadblocks to Japan's full political participation in East Asia, and because their views are not widely discredited in Japanese society, they are able to continue influencing Japanese policies. In this thesis, I argue that because elements of nationalism are deeply ingrained in Japanese society, nationalism continues to be reflected in Japan's politics, particularly around human rights. The structure of Japan's political system, heavily influenced by the Liberal

Democratic Party, and the opinions that are prevalent in Japanese society, allow nationalist organizations and its members to have direct influence in Japanese policy-making, even if they are not directly supported by the population. As such, Japanese policy surrounding human rights is a reflection of nationalist influence in Japanese society and government.

There has been extensive scholarly work done on Japan and different aspects of Japanese nationalism, including its history and influences, and there has been a small amount of work dedicated to disenfranchised groups in Japan, for example women, the LGBTQ community, foreigners, and others. The ‘Japanese identity’ has also often been used synonymously with Japanese nationalism, and has been studied in relation to Japanese opinions and treatment of non-Japanese others. However, very rarely do scholars explicitly mention human rights or the relationship between human rights and Japanese nationalism, except in the context of the Japanese military’s conduct in World War II.

In searching for materials in my research for this thesis, I found virtually nothing relating Japanese nationalism to human rights policy, or mentioning Japan’s human rights obligations. The most directly related text I did find was a single paragraph in *Routledge Handbook of Culture and Society*.² Organizations like Human Rights Watch include Japan’s obligations and shortcomings in specific country reports, but do not delve into the

² Victoria Lyon Bestor, Akiko Yamagata, and Theodore C. Bestor, *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*. (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 161-62.

reasons behind such shortcomings.³ Otherwise, nationalism and human rights are treated separately in academic work on Japan. In addition, much of the scholarship readily available on Japan comes from the West, often positioning Japan as non-Western, acknowledging it as a state on par with the liberal democracies of the West. This is not to say that Japan is a Western state, but by discussing Japan as culturally non-Western, it often amounts to giving Japan a free pass in such ‘Western institutions’ as human rights.

This thesis makes a unique contribution to the literature because it centers the discussion of Japanese nationalism around its relationship to human rights. Rather than focusing exclusively on one dimension of Japanese nationalism and society, or on only one affected group of people, this thesis takes a holistic approach to delve into the relationship between nationalism and politics in Japan as the root of the issues in Japan’s policies related to human rights. This thesis also considers political contexts, both domestic and international, as part of the driving forces behind the continued survival of nationalism in Japan and the reasons for the policies supported by nationalists, rather than considering politics to be separate from nationalist influence over society, as much of the previous literature does. The goal of this thesis is not to generalize the entirety of Japanese society as zealous nationalists, or to single out Japan as the only liberal democracy not living up to its human rights obligations. Rather, it is to look at Japan as a case study of how a society is an important factor in the way policies are created in any given state, and how nationalism affects societies, and by extension policy decisions. I believe that in this historical moment, with the resurgence of nationalism and

³ "World Report 2019: Japan," Human Rights Watch, January 17, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/japan>.

authoritarianism around the world, it is especially important to explore the relationship between nationalism, society, and politics, not only to understand why nationalism becomes popular, but also to understand its effects and how to counter the negative ones. It is also important to explicitly tie human rights into the discussion of Japanese nationalism so that it maintains as much a place in discourse as forces that attempt to undermine them. I believe that by bringing human rights into this discussion, their position can be strengthened in society and public discourse, which is important right now in Japan as well as in East Asian geopolitics generally.

Much of my research is based in analysis of the modern history of Japan and its importance in today's society. Nationalism in Japan played a central role in Japan's modernization, and its influence over society during that period of time is important to understand for any discussion of Japanese society today. In addition, human rights are much more recent of a concept in Japan than nationalism, and the tensions that exist between them have persisted and grown since the middle of the twentieth century. With this context, to get at the influence of nationalism over Japanese policy, I focus on a few areas of policy: immigration and refugee acceptance, citizenship, issues of racial discrimination, and foreign policy, which includes issues stemming from World War II war crimes and policies regarding international relations with other states. As such, I draw on recent and current events into my analysis, particularly regarding laws and political relations, to explain the relationship between nationalist organizations and the government's policies. This will include news stories, from the West and from Japan, as well as information from Japanese nationalist organizations, such as is available on

websites, either already translated into English or otherwise by myself, with assistance from bilingual speakers of English and Japanese.

My thesis is thus organized for the reader to first gain a more in depth understanding of nationalism, followed by a history of modern Japan and Japanese nationalism, Japan's domestic and international political and societal contexts, including contemporary nationalist organizations and agendas, and finally an analysis of how nationalism is reflected in Japanese human rights policies.

Chapter 1 is a literature review that lays a theoretical framework for the rest of this thesis. The first part of the review focuses on three different approaches to nationalism: primordialism, ethno-symbolism, and modernism. The discussion around them goes beyond detailing nationalism, and centers on where nationalism stems from, which has a role in shaping nationalism and determining how it manifests in a given society. This section also addresses what it means to be a nation, and how it differs from the state, as well as its relationship with ethnicity. The second part focuses on literature that addresses the Japanese identity, and how and why it formed the way it did. Identity is an important part of nationalism generally, and concerns about it are extremely prevalent in Japanese nationalist discourse. A discussion of Japanese identity is necessary in order to apply the theoretical framework of nationalism to the specific Japanese context and distinguish this thesis as a case study of the much larger topic.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the history of modern Japan and Japanese nationalism. The chapter starts in the mid-nineteenth century, around the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, and progresses chronologically until the late twentieth century,

detailing Japan's imperial expansion and eventual defeat in World War II, and Japan's post-war recovery and rehabilitation into the international community. It then delves into that historical context to address the origins of Japanese nationalism, including the ways in which and reasons why it manifested in early modern Japan. This chapter ends with an analysis of what elements of nationalism are still prevalent in Japanese society today.

Chapter 3 addresses Japan's contemporary political and societal contexts. It begins with an overview of the Japanese political system and a brief political history, including those of the Liberal Democratic Party, since it has been in power for most of the post-war era, followed by an overview of Japan's political positionality on a regional and global scale. The second part of the chapter addresses today's Japanese nationalist organizations, primarily Nippon Kaigi, as the largest and most prominent one, looking at their reach, methods, and agendas.

Finally, in Chapter 4 I analyze how nationalist influence is apparent in Japanese policies, specifically in relation to human rights. It details various government policies, including immigration and citizenship, racial discrimination, education, and foreign policy, and how they affect human rights issues prevalent in Japan today. In particular, it examines the relationship between these policies and the nationalist movement in Japan, in order to demonstrate the prevalence of nationalist influence in Japanese policy-making. This includes which human rights are or are not addressed by the government, regardless of which human rights treaties Japan is party to. The analysis primarily focuses on these policies by examining their nationalist nature, as well as efforts by nationalist organizations to encourage or maintain them. In addition, I analyze these policies' impact

on human rights in Japan, the relationship between human rights and Japanese society at large.

In my conclusion, I summarize my findings on the relationship between human rights and the systemic nationalist influence on government policies. I also examine the possible avenues for change and the strengthening of human rights in Japan and East Asia, as well as the limitations of and possibilities for expanding upon this research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Nationalism in Japan was forged with a strong relationship between the nation and identity, and both of these concepts are necessary to understand in order to fully explore Japanese nationalism. To develop an understanding of nationalism in Japan, this chapter explores different theories about nationalism, which will inform my own understanding of Japanese nationalism as it has developed. This is crucial for an exploration of how nationalism has influenced and become ingrained in Japanese society today. This discussion intersects with discussions on the nation and ethnicity, all of which are important concepts in understanding identity in modern Japan. The Japanese national identity developed alongside nationalism in Japan's modern era, and that identity remains a strong force in society today and an important tool of Japanese nationalists, and therefore influential in politics. As such, I also review the scholarship that answers what the Japanese identity is and how it became that way.

The first part of the review focuses on the different theoretical approaches to nationalism: primordialism, ethnosymbolism, and modernism, represented by Clifford Geertz, Anthony Smith, and Ernest Gellner, respectively, as well as defining the nation. These approaches differ on their understanding of the relationship between nationalism and the nation. After explaining the different approaches, I apply them to the Japanese context in order to determine which approach fits best. The second part thus addresses the Japanese national identity and how it was shaped by Japanese nationalism. I focus on the works of two authors, Delmer Brown and John Lie, in order to examine the development

of Japan's national identity, and to determine whether nationalism still plays a role in society today.

The Nation and Nationalism

Before discussing nationalism in a meaningful way, it is necessary to first understand "the nation." The nation is commonly thought to be an interchangeable term for the state, but the differences between them are distinct enough to require clarification. The state is defined as a political unit that encompasses the people within a given territory. In contrast, the nation is a community based on an intangible, psychological bond that connects a given people and differentiates it from all others, based on some shared sense of culture.⁴ In this way, a state may encompass multiple nations, or a nation may be spread across multiple states. There are a few states, however, whose borders mostly coincide with the territory of a nation and may be labelled as a nation-state, in which the differences between the terms are unimportant.⁵ Japan is one such state, as one of the most ethnically homogeneous states in the world.

Nationalism is tied to the nation, rather than the state, although in the case of Japan can apply to both. The modern Japanese state and the Japanese nation developed alongside each other starting from the late nineteenth century, and as such Japanese nationalism is intricately tied to the state. To understand this relationship and the nature of Japanese nationalism, I draw from three theories on nationalism, each based on the

⁴ Walker Connor, "A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a ...," In *Nationalism*, edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 36-37.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

works of one representative author. The first is primordialism, as promoted by Geertz, an anthropologist, who argues that nationalism arises from the basic historic attachments between people of the same community. The second, modernism, is promoted by Gellner, a philosopher and social anthropologist who describes nationalism as a product of societal elites in the modern era. Finally, ethno-symbolism as argued by Smith, a historical sociologist, promotes the idea that there is a relationship between the elites and the people of a given ethnic group, based on the group's shared culture and history.

According to Geertz, nationalism arises from the 'primordial attachments' that bind together a community of people. A primordial attachment is

one that stems from the 'givens' - or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' - of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities... are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves.⁶

In essence, the connections to one's community as a result of being born into it are perceived to be natural and are given an immense amount of importance because of that perception, whether it is truly natural or not. These important ties give rise, Geertz argues, to the sense of nationhood that nationalism is built from. In this sense, nationalism is derived from the nation, rather than a driving force of nation-building.

⁶ Clifford Geertz, "Primordial and Civic Ties," In *Nationalism*, edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 31.

Gellner, however, argues that instead the opposite is true, that nationalism is what creates a nation where it did not exist before. For Gellner, nationalism is a product of modernity and industrialization, rather than a natural process connected to a nation.⁷ Modernization creates “standardized, literacy- and education-based systems of communication,” which Gellner refers to as ‘high cultures,’ which are used by nation-building elites as the impetus of a nationalist movement. While nationalism draws on historical cultures, it transforms them, even if it claims otherwise, and reshapes a modern society loosely based on a presumably shared past. As such, Gellner defines nationalism as “the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases the totality, of the population.”⁸ In this way, nationalism shapes not only the culture of a people, but also their beliefs about their own culture, even when those beliefs are not founded on historical actuality. As a result, nationalism creates sentiments that become political principles when the nation overlaps with the state, and as Gellner describes it, “a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones.”⁹ The national community is constructed and shaped by nationalist sentiments, and establishes what it means to belong to that community.

The ethno-symbolist approach of Smith combines aspects of primordialism and modernism, placing focus on both the nation and its history. For Smith, the nation, and by extension nationalism, is based on ethnicity, or the *ethnie*, which he defines as a “named

⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 39.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 53-56

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1

human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories and one or more common elements of culture, including and association with a homeland, and some degree of solidarity, at least among the elites.”¹⁰ According to Smith, the modern nation is the result of pre-modern ethnic groups, and as such are based in those groups’ cultures and symbols. Nationalism, too, is a modern movement that is based on a group’s shared history and culture, and is defined by Smith as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining identity, unity and autonomy of a social group some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential nation.”¹¹ While the process of nation-building occurs around the core ethnic group, nationalism is the foundation of a modern nation. History is the connection between modern nationalism and primordial attachments that Smith argues is missing from the other theories of nationalism, and as such nationalism as a phenomenon runs concurrently with nation-building.

These approaches to nationalism were developed with a European frame of thinking about nations and nationalism, and as such need to be applied specifically to Japan to determine their applicability. Geertz’s primordial approach depends on a sense of organic community that exists before the emergence of nationalism. In Japan, however, the Japanese identity is a relatively modern development, only becoming a truly national consciousness under the nationalist direction of the Meiji era (1868-1912).¹² Primordialism, therefore, does not adequately explain Japanese nationalism.

¹⁰ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18

¹² Delmer M. Brown, *Nationalism in Japan*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), 9.

That leaves the debate between modernism and ethno-symbolism. According to Gellner's modernist approach, nationalism would not have taken root in Japan before modernization and industrialization. Indeed, prior to Japan's modern era there was a much lesser degree of national consciousness, and under the Tokugawa shogunate (1600-1868) individuals were more likely to identify with their local domain, rather than "Japan." After the Meiji Restoration (1868), the emperor and the oligarchic elites embarked on a program of centralizing the government and the nation. Broad education-based efforts, as well as the implementation of state shinto, among other modernization efforts, were used as tools for spreading an ideology focused on loyalty to the emperor, based on ancient Japanese beliefs and customs.¹³ This occurred as part of the Meiji government's state-building process, which tied the Japanese nation to the Japanese state. Even today, Japanese nationalism is espoused largely by societal elites in the government and private sector, and its principles are largely consistent with Meiji era nationalism.

However, Smith's ethno-symbolist approach also has merit in the Japanese context. While there was little broad national consciousness, the foundation for the modern Japanese nation was built up over 1500 years. Geographically, Japan was largely isolated for most of its pre-modern history, which allowed for the development of internal unity over time. Japan was also mostly isolated culturally, with the exception of the relatively late introduction of Buddhism, resulting in homogeneity in race, language, and religion.¹⁴ There were also periods of time in which national consciousness was

¹³ Ibid., 101-03.

¹⁴ Ibid., 6-8.

heightened, such as in the face of Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century.¹⁵ The emperor has served as an especially important symbol of the nation as well. Even though there were times when the emperor was not politically important or powerful, the imperial line has, according to legend, never been broken since the first emperor, Emperor Jimmu, in 660 B.C. This is according to the first written historical record in Japan, the *kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters), finished in 712 A.D.¹⁶ While the historical accuracy of the *kojiki* has not and likely will never be proven, it serves as a shared cultural symbol, which unifies the Japanese *ethnie*. The roots of modern Japanese nationalism can be found in the nation's ancient history, even if it did not exist in its current form before modernization.

For this thesis, I believe that Smith's ethno-symbolist approach best describes the nature of Japanese nationalism. Japanese nationalism is a modern invention, of course, but I agree with Smith that history provides the basis for modern nationalism. The elements necessary for the creation of the Japanese nation were present in Japan for centuries before the advent of modernization. Even though the unified ethnic and national consciousness was not present until the modern era, historical processes furthered its development up until that point. At the beginning of modernization, nationalism was developed and popularized by the elites in the Meiji government. Elements of modern nationalism, drawn from past cultural elements, remain in Japanese society, especially ideologies around race, language, and culture, and societal elites still engage in nationalism as it was promoted during modernization. Ethno-symbolism covers both the

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

historical and modern factors of nationalism, and thus is best suited to fit the case of Japan's nationalism.

Japanese National Identity

The second part of this review is dedicated to exploring how and in what ways the Japanese national identity developed in order to understand how it has impacted modern Japanese society. As mentioned above, there was no concrete national Japanese identity prior to the modernizing reforms of the Meiji government. These reforms were a product of state-run nationalism intended to shape the new Japanese identity in ways that centralized national authority under the emperor. While the Japanese identity has somewhat evolved since the early twentieth century, many elements of identity in Japanese society today are remnants of Meiji nationalism. I draw from two authors who have written on Japanese nationalism and identity: Brown and Lie. Brown wrote extensively on Japanese nationalism and identity soon after the end of World War II, and his work addresses much of the nationalist influence on Japanese identity between the Meiji Restoration and the lead-up to war in the 1940s. Lie addresses the pre-war influence, but also describes the redevelopment of the Japanese identity in the post-war era and its impacts on society today.

Brown's work details the formation and emergence of Japanese national identity and nationalism over the long course of Japanese history. His argument claims that the societal elements necessary for nationhood and nationalism were present in Japan from early on in history, and that it was shaped over periods of unity and disunity in the

Japanese islands.¹⁷ In his historical analysis, Brown claims that by the time of the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese nation was prime for development through modernization. The Meiji reforms served to do more than just the centralize the government, but also unified the Japanese people under a single national identity. These reforms were widescale and affected all aspects of the Japanese nation and state: politically, militarily, economically, and culturally.

Brown describes the different reforms in detail and explains their impact on Japanese unity. Soon after the Restoration, the central government set about abolishing the Tokugawa political system. This included abolishing former class distinctions, centralizing the military under imperial control, thereby taking autonomy away from the local *han* (domain) leaders, and ultimately abolishing the *han* and replacing them with *ken* (prefectures). Beyond erasing the former political order, it also politically united the Japanese people and paved the way for a single political identity.¹⁸ The emperor also further established the military under the imperial control with a rescript in 1882, and “by continuous effort along these lines, the samurai code of ethics (*Bushido*) tended to become the code of ethics for all loyal citizens of the Japanese state,” and *bushido* became a powerful unifying force for the army and society as a whole in giving service to the emperor.¹⁹ Economically, the government was heavily involved in economic expansion, and the subsequent industrialization brought about a greater degree of social unity, due to the centralized investment of capital. Under the state-led economic growth,

¹⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹⁸ Ibid., 94-96.

¹⁹ Ibid., 98.

there was no emergence of a “middle class” and any private investment was backed by the government, allowing the political and economic elites to maintain centralized control of the economy.²⁰ The government also sought to increase ideological unity among the Japanese people by tying the ancient Shinto religion directly to emperor as the traditional head of the religion and by extension the state. State Shinto, and religion more broadly, was used to enforce national ideology of loyalty to the emperor.²¹ Finally, education reform played a critical role in Japan’s modernization and unification. The state built a system of universal education, which drastically increased literacy rates, and aside from ‘scientific’ education that was imported from the West, also focused on ‘moral’ education that enforced piety and loyalty to the emperor and the nation, which further unified the Japanese people ideologically.²²

According to Brown, the combined impact of these reforms was to develop a real sense of nationhood and ‘national essence’ in Japan. Nationalism continued to influence the national identity and be influenced in return as they developed together. Ideas about the Japanese ‘national essence’ were broadly propagated in the more literate society, especially giving voice to the old values of Shintoism and Confucianism.²³ The Sino-Japanese War (1894-95)²⁴, the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05)²⁵, and general antagonism from the West further served to increase Japanese social solidarity as time

²⁰ Ibid., 100.

²¹ Ibid., 101-103.

²² Ibid., 103-06.

²³ Ibid., 113-18.

²⁴ Ibid., 127-28.

²⁵ Ibid., 142-44.

went on, according to Brown.²⁶ This gradually built up leading up to the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II, under the direction of nationalist political and academic elites. From Brown's historical analysis then, the Japanese identity prior to World War II was centered on loyalty to the emperor and by extension, the Japanese nation. This loyalty was based on race, with Imperial edicts frequently recalling the loyalty of the nation's ancestors and the importance of continuing on that legacy in the nation that had arisen in the Japanese archipelago.

Lie also describes the importance of the pre-war nationalist reforms and developments in shaping the modern Japanese identity, although to a lesser extent. The centralization of power in Japan during the Meiji era was certainly crucial to fostering a sense of nationhood, according to Lie.²⁷ Also important were Japan's new interactions with foreign states after centuries of near isolation from outside contact. The arrival of Western states and the opening of Japan gave the nation definable others with which to compare itself and crystallize differences into its identity, especially in the face of the threat posed by Western imperial powers.²⁸ The nation- and state-building efforts of the Meiji government were focused on modernizing Japan to be able to defend itself from the established world powers, which further led to Japan's own imperialist pursuits.

However, Lie argues that during this imperialist period in Japan's history, the sense of Japanese identity *included* the peoples they colonized, and that the empire, while based on Japanese ideology, was not believed to be 'monoethnic.' While the imperial

²⁶ Ibid., 144-46.

²⁷ John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 119-20.

²⁸ Ibid.

project was pursued with a belief in the superiority of the Japanese ethnic group, the national identity of Japan was inclusive of the other ethnic groups in the empire: Okinawan, Taiwanese, and Korean by the end of the Meiji era. For Lie, these two ideas were not incompatible and were widespread in early modern Japan, even though these societies were subject to forced assimilation into Japanese culture.²⁹ This would mean that the Japanese nation, at least prior to World War II, was not tied to the Japanese ethnicity. The nation was still tied to the state, however, and at that point the state was self-perceived as ‘multiethnic,’ yet still Japanese in nature.

According to Lie, the more recent Japanese identity finds its roots in the post-war period, specifically in the ‘1955 system,’ the political situation that was created with the formation of the LDP and its subsequent dominance in politics, where many contemporary features of ‘Japaneseness’ find their roots. Lie acknowledges that continuities exist between pre-war and immediate post-war Japanese society, but the changes were far more drastic. In pre-war Japan, the two main obstacles to national consciousness were regional diversity and status hierarchy, and in the post-war era both were substantially eliminated. Belonging to the Japanese nation became more important than belonging to a certain region, and decreased income inequality, combined with an egalitarianism born from the ‘total war’ mobilization of the early 1940s, led to a decline in status hierarchies.³⁰ By the 1960s, Japan had rapidly modernized, with significant influence from the six years of American military occupation.³¹ Ultrationalism almost

²⁹ Ibid., 122-23

³⁰ Ibid., 126.

³¹ Ibid., 129.

entirely collapsed, and political power was taken from the emperor and given to the National Diet, marking the transition between monarchy and democracy, and societal attitudes about the previous centers of life, the family and the community, shifted towards a Western-style nuclear family and home ideal.³²

As a result of this modernization and ‘Americanization,’ Japan experienced rapid economic growth, which led to a period of relative prosperity. During this time, the Japanese began to question what it meant to be ‘Japanese,’ which at the time did not have a meaningful answer.³³ What arose from this period of reflection was a new sense of Japanese identity, one informed by a new Japanese nationalism and right-wing ideology. The Japanese nation became defined by its monoethnicity, as a unique nation with an ethnically and culturally homogenous population, and remarkable as a result.³⁴ This narrative of Japan became popularized through *nihonjinron* (theories on the Japanese), an academic field dedicated to explaining the uniqueness and superiority of Japanese society and culture that was especially popular in the 1970s.³⁵ This belief in a homogenous nation, tied to both the state and the Japanese ethnicity, has persisted until today, and has helped nationalists regain power that they lost after the war.

Lie argues that this nationalist ideology gained popularity precisely because it is a new, different kind of nationalism than existed in the pre-war era. According to him, after the war, everything related to the old nationalism was shunned, and even though nationalists remained vocal, they were hardly influential. Early on in the post-war era,

³² Ibid., 125-26.

³³ Ibid., 129-30.

³⁴ Ibid., 130-31.

³⁵ Ibid.

elements of the LDP even attempted to restore pre-war nationalism, to no avail.³⁶ As such, the new nationalism was different in that it was what pre-war nationalism was not. As opposed to the old multiethnic nationalism, the new nationalism was monoethnic. Instead of focusing on the emperor or the old militaristic Japanese spirit, it focuses on Japan's success in economic recovery and prosperity under a pro-Western, capitalist society.³⁷ For Lie, the new Japanese nationalism is a response to the old nationalism, running counter to it in a (successful) attempt to redefine the nation. Therefore, while there are some continuities between pre-war and post-war Japanese nationalism and society, there are significant differences that have drastically changed Japan's national identity.

I find that both authors have merit in their commentary on Japanese national identity, but I think that Brown's historical analysis provides points that counter some of Lie's assertions. Granted, Lie wrote with more historical hindsight than Brown, but much of the research has also corroborated Brown's claims. Primarily, I argue that Lie discounts the importance of nationalism in pre-war Japanese society in shaping Japanese national identity and its legacy in the post-war era. While it is true that anything associated with pre-war nationalism is shunned even today, it established the foundation on which post-war society was built. The racism that was institutionalized during the pre-war era was part of what drove Japan's imperial pursuits and the forced assimilation policies implemented against colonized peoples, which are evidence of Japanese efforts to homogenize the multiethnic empire. Pre-war nationalism was inextricably linked to the

³⁶ Ibid., 132-33.

³⁷ Ibid., 133-34.

state-building process, and that process was informed by the racial superiority of the Japanese people over its neighbors, which is also a key aspect of post-war nationalism, according to Lie himself. In addition, while today's nationalism seems different to the wider population, nationalists maintain the same goals of restoring parts of pre-war Japan, which is discussed more in a later chapter. The current belief in a monoethnic nation is also part of pre-war nationalist influence, as that the racism of post-war nationalism stems from the Meiji state-building project. Overall, the 'new' nationalism of the post-war era, including all its effects on society, is not new at all. Rather, it is the same pre-war nationalism refitted for a new political and societal context, with the goal of partly returning to the Japanese nation of the past.

Conclusion

Nationalism was a driving factor in the formation of the Japanese national identity, and continues to play a role in national identity today. During the Meiji era, nationalism was used to establish a new Japanese national consciousness, constructed and promoted by the elites at the time, based in an ethnic and cultural history of the Japanese people. Under this nationalist project, the Japanese identity was tied to both the Japanese ethnicity and the state. Today, nationalism is still promoted by political and economic elites, and even if the population does not broadly agree with their platform, nationalist influence is still visible in societal beliefs. This is clearly visible in the popular belief in Japan as a monoethnic nation, despite the presence of a small but significant minority populations. This belief is rooted in nationalist ideology that is left over from the pre-war

era and is racist at its core, perpetuating a belief in innate Japanese racial superiority, and was able to appeal to the population by appealing to a sense of economic success in the post-war era. The Japanese identity has been constructed and reconstructed since the beginning of its modern era, and nationalism has played a role throughout.

Using the literature, it is important to define what Japanese nationalism encompasses. For this thesis, Japanese nationalism consists of a belief in the superiority of the Japanese nation, which can be used interchangeably with race or ethnicity, over others, and this nation is centered on the emperor, the symbol of an innate and immutable shared Japanese culture. This nationalism is driven and promoted by the societal elite, drawing on Japan's history in order to shape public ideologies on the Japanese identity, and these elites have an interest in maintaining Japan as a monoethnic nation.

Nationalism in Japan is best summarized by a 2005 statement by current Deputy Prime Minister (and former Prime Minister 2008-09) Taro Aso, in which he described Japan as "one nation, one civilization, one language, one culture, and one race, the like of which there is no other on this earth."³⁸

Having established a framework for nationalism and the Japanese national identity, the next chapter provides historical context for Japanese nationalism. Historical context is important for understanding why Japanese nationalism developed the way it did, and why it affected Japanese society so profoundly. In providing context, the next

³⁸ "Aso Says Japan Is Nation of 'one Race'," The Japan Times, October 18, 2005, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2005/10/18/national/aso-says-japan-is-nation-of-one-race/#.XJgujJhKhPZ>.

chapter also details the nationalist elements still present in society today, beyond the fact of its ongoing presence in political discourse.

Chapter 2: History of Japanese Nationalism

As Japanese nationalism developed over the course of modern Japanese history, it is important to understand context for its development. Japan's modern history was shaped by a state focused on building itself up to a level of equality with the European and American imperial powers, which determined much of Japan's behavior leading to the mid-twentieth century. Nationalism played a dual role before World War II, serving both to establish a Japanese national consciousness and to position itself in relation to the West. This transition to the modern era was defined by societal transformation brought about by political changes, which were themselves responses to the imperialist influence of other powers. Nationalist forces directed these changes from the elite levels of political and academic society, and shaped not only the modern era, but also the memory of past eras in order to influence the broader population. Japanese nationalism gradually shifted over time, eventually reaching the level of ultranationalism in the 1930s that led to war and defeat, and eventually returning under the economically prosperous post-war Japanese society.

This chapter addresses the evolution of Japanese nationalism through Japan's modern era, from the mid-nineteenth century until the late twentieth century. The analysis describes Japanese nationalism in its different stages and provides historical context for its characteristics, split into four periods of time: the years leading up to and through the Meiji era, the Taisho era, and the Showa era,³⁹ split into the pre-war and wartime period

³⁹ The names of the different eras correspond with the posthumous names of the emperors that reigned during that time.

and the post-war period. The chapter ends with an analysis of the ways in which the influence of nationalism is present in Japanese society today.

Historical Context

Pre-Meiji and Meiji era (~1850-1912)

Prior to modernization, Japan was governed by the Tokugawa shogunate, a feudal military government that had secured control over Japan in 1600. The shogunate maintained a policy of *sakoku* (closed country), keeping Japan almost entirely isolated from the rest of the world, with the exception of the Dutch, who were allowed access to a single port, and limited trade with neighboring countries, and also included keeping Japanese people from leaving Japan. This policy remained in place for over two centuries, until the arrival of Commodore Perry from the United States in 1853, with the mission of opening Japan up to trade with the U.S.. Perry's arrival served as a catalyst for the end of the Tokugawa shogunate and the 'restoration' of the emperor to political power in Japan.⁴⁰

With the arrival of Perry and his 'black ships,' the shogunate was left with a decision on continuing Japan's isolation or submitting to the American demands, in the face of superior military technology. The shogunate's decision to open Japan and sign a treaty with the U.S. led to other European imperial powers, namely France, Britain, the Netherlands, and Russia, rushing to sign treaties of their own with Japan. These treaties

⁴⁰ Japan had been experiencing elements of political and social upheaval well before the arrival of Perry, and the Meiji Restoration had a variety of causes, but Perry's arrival served as an effective catalyst for the rapid change that occurred in the 1850s and 1860s.

left Japan essentially at the mercy of the Western powers economically, and these 'Unequal Treaties' resulted in an intense conservative reaction against the shogunate.⁴¹ The Imperial Court itself was opposed to the shogunate's decision to open Japan to the Western foreigners, and the shogunate slowly lost legitimacy among the elites in Japanese society. The emperor gradually gained political independence and influence as the shogunate was weakened, and anti-foreign sentiment continued to rise. Ultimately, this tension led to brief conflict in 1868 between the shogunate and clans supporting the emperor, culminating in the shogunate's surrender and the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

Following the Restoration, the emperor and the governing elites that had supported him understood that without drastic changes, Japan would remain unequal to the West and subject to their demands. The new government set about trying to renegotiate the Unequal Treaties, but continued to be blocked by the Western powers, "who insisted that they would not give up their privileges before the legal and political system of Japan could provide adequately 'modern' protection of their rights."⁴² The inequality between Japan and the imperial powers of the West served to keep Japan from participating in equal relationships in foreign affairs. The government needed to bridge that inequality in order to protect its own interests.

It was at this historical moment that Japanese nationalism began to take its modern form. The emperor needed to centralize power in order to maintain his authority. In fact, the Restoration had not even been considered a particularly important event to the

⁴¹ Christopher Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 16-17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 43.

majority of the Japanese population at the time.⁴³ In order to strengthen the emperor's legitimacy, the governing elites set about centralizing all aspects of Japanese society in order to establish a discernible, united Japanese nation.

This project of centralization was critical to building the modern Japanese state and constructing the modern Japanese national identity. Prior to the Meiji Restoration, even under the somewhat centralized power of the shogunate, there had yet to be a unified "Japanese" identity; rather, Japanese identities were based more on one's local domain.⁴⁴ To remedy this, Japanese leaders and scholars imported knowledge and technology from the West and basing the state-building process on Western conceptions of the state.⁴⁵ In order to foster the belief in a "Japanese" nation, the Meiji government focused on centralizing power under the emperor and reforming society into the mold of a Western state.

As previously discussed, these reforms included wholesale political and social organization, centralizing military authority and the education system, and industrializing Japan's economy. The first reforms included abolishing former class distinctions and centralizing the military authority under the emperor, and replacing the old Tokugawa era domains with new provinces, thereby erasing part of the former basis for local identity.⁴⁶ The establishment of the National Diet served to further centralize political power in the government, as opposed to local elites. Cultural elements of the past were used by the Meiji government to reinforce the emperor's authority, especially *bushido*, the codes of

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, 118.

⁴⁵ Christopher Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction*, 48-51.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 94-96.

honor for the samurai⁴⁷, and Shinto, the ancient religion of Japan.⁴⁸ The government also involved itself in the economic affairs of the state, ensuring that the economy was modeled after the West.⁴⁹ The state also built a new education system, providing a standardized universal education to the population and standardizing the Japanese language to further unify the nation.⁵⁰ By the 1890s, the Meiji reforms had modernized Japan enough to be able to renegotiate its treaties with the West, and establishing itself as the first modern Asian country.⁵¹

In addition to modernizing domestically, the Meiji government started to become its own imperial state, modeling itself after the Western powers. The first territorial expansion overseen by the Meiji state was when Hokkaido, previously belonging to the native Ainu population, was declared to be imperial land in 1873.⁵² Next was the Ryukyu Kingdom, which had previously been an independent state and later a tributary to both China and Japan. Japan invaded the Ryukyu Islands in 1872 and later annexed them in 1879 and reorganized them into Okinawa province. This was met with resistance from the Ryukyuan population, although Japan's power was superior enough to maintain control. The conquest of Okinawa was a significant step on Japan's road to empire, as it was considered to be the first step towards claiming more islands to the south later on.⁵³

⁴⁷ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 101-103.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 100.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 103-06.

⁵¹ Ibid., 43-44.

⁵² John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, 91.

⁵³ Ibid., 96-98.

Over the next three decades, Japan also fought wars with China and Russia, and managed to secure territory on the Asian mainland. Japan was in heavy competition with China for influence over the Korean Peninsula in the late nineteenth century, and the tension between Japan and Korea, which favored China, eventually led to the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894. By 1895, Japan had defeated China with its more modernized military, and established exclusive influence over Korea and taking Taiwan and the Liaodong Peninsula from China as part of reparations. Soon after, Russia, France, and Germany insisted that Japan vacate the Liaodong Peninsula, which it did, only for Russia to occupy the peninsula and other European states to take advantage of a weakened China to occupy different port cities. Tensions between Japan and Russia eventually led to the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905. Japan soundly defeated Russia, which was the first time a non-European power had defeated a European state in the modern era, establishing Japan as more or less equal in power to the other modern states, as well as further influence over a weakened China. Japan took this opportunity in 1905 to occupy Korea as a protectorate, and later formally annexing it in 1910. With this, Japan secured territory on the mainland, a dominant position in Asian regional politics, and a seat at the table in international political affairs.

During the Meiji era, the main role for nationalism in Japan was to build a national consciousness in order to drive the state's modernization efforts forward. This was in itself a response to the outside pressure placed on Japan by the imperial powers of the Europe and the United States. These foreign states interacted with Japan on an unequal level, demanding unfair treaties and exercising their superior power to secure

their own interests. In effect, Japan's interactions with foreign powers was a driving force of the growth of nationalism; the Unequal Treaties were viewed as a humiliation to the Japanese, and the lack of respect afforded to Japan by the West contributed to a national sense of inferiority and the need to establish Japan with an equal status, led by the governing elites.

The result was to model Japan's state-building efforts on Western states, importing knowledge and technology and applying it towards modernization. By the time of the Sino-Japanese War, Japan had become a fully modern state, with enough power to defeat China and establish influence over East Asia. The war with China had been popular, gaining support from the population after dissatisfaction with the seemingly excessive expense and privilege of the military, and the belief that they were demonstrating their equality with the Western powers.⁵⁴ Even so, Japan was still treated unequally in the aftermath of the war, as demonstrated by the 'Triple Intervention' regarding the Liaodong Peninsula, to which the Japanese took great offense. The Europeans' refusal to treat Japan as a modern nation, with the exception of Britain, seemed to be purely racist, deeply frustrating the Japanese. Thus, nationalism in Japan became focused near the end of the Meiji era on ensuring Japan's dominance in Asia and equal recognition from the other imperial states in response to foreign pressures.

⁵⁴ Christopher Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction*, 66.

Taisho era (1912-1926)

The death of Emperor Meiji in 1912 marked the beginning of Emperor Taisho's rule for a relatively brief 14 years. The Taisho era is known for being a period of development and democratic values. Japan had already been mildly democratic, although suffrage was only available for the wealthiest men; the right to vote was expanded somewhat in this period. The further democratization of Japan led to a shift in power from the old Meiji oligarchs to the political parties in the National Diet. In turn, policies more popularly supported by the people, including a smaller military budget and overall demilitarization, were advanced in the new political climate. Japan also experienced an economic boom during World War I in Europe, and a middle class emerged. With democratization and economic prosperity, Japanese society gradually became more Westernized and liberalized than during the Meiji era.⁵⁵

Abroad, Japan managed to make strides in its pursuit of equal membership in the European community of nations. In World War I, Japan entered the war on behalf of its ally, Britain, taking German colonial possessions in China and the Pacific. For its contributions to the Allied war effort, Japan was given a seat at the table in the Versailles peace talks, in which it was allowed to keep the territory it took during the war. Japan was also granted a permanent membership on the Council of the League of Nations. This served as a source of pride in Japan, where people were enthusiastic about the recognition given by the Europeans and the United States. However, the racial equality clause the Japanese delegation proposed as an amendment to the League of Nations charter was shut

⁵⁵ Ibid., 72-73.

down by the U.S. and Britain (despite the approval of most of the delegations). The defeat of the amendment sparked anger among the Japanese people, perceiving it as another instance of Western racism, resulting in protests and riots.⁵⁶

As time went on, the general prosperity and nature of the Taisho era began to decline. The economic bubble created by the war eventually burst, and Japan spiralled into depression. This allowed the largest corporations to completely take over the economy, which resulted in extreme wealth inequality.⁵⁷ In addition, the political parties in the Diet were limited in their ability to implement policies by the conservative military, which still maintained significant political clout that prevented leftist movements from strengthening and spreading. By the end of the Taisho era, the continued economic troubles, foreign pressures, and ineffective party governments led to weakened democracy and a strengthened military in Japan.

Due to political and societal shifts in Japan during the Taisho era, Japanese nationalism also took on a different character than during the Meiji era. The reactionary nationalism of the Meiji era was not readily visible in Taisho Japan. Economic prosperity at home and increasing prestige on the global stage led to increased national confidence and feelings of security. Japanese attitudes were more internationalist than they were isolationist. As such, nationalism was not needed to mobilize the nation for competition against other imperial powers. Instead, it was geared towards explaining Japan's prosperity and normalizing modernity within Japanese culture. It was not the progressive

⁵⁶ Ibid., 74-75.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 76.

state-building force that it was under the Meiji emperor, nor was it the ultranationalist aggressive imperialism of the next two decades.

Showa era (1926-1945)

The Showa era began with the ascension of Emperor Hirohito (posthumously Showa) amid the economic downturn and the political instability of the mid 1920s. The inability of political parties to deal with economic and foreign affairs continued to contribute to the decline of the parties and the democratic process in Japan. The critical blow was the Great Depression, which quickly and dramatically damaged the Japanese economy. The population became increasingly frustrated with the political parties, and the 1930s began with a period of political violence that saw the assassinations and attempted assassinations of several high profile political leaders, including prime ministers.⁵⁸ Popular discontent with the parliamentary governments paved the way for the military to gradually gain control over Japanese government and society.

The military had been at odds with the party governments since they had risen to power during the Taisho era, and their competing aims drove the military to take as much power as they could during the 1930s. For a while, the military had believed that Japan needed to prepare for total war in order to ensure victory in future conflicts, which would include being able to mobilize the Japanese civilian population and economy towards any war effort, which they learned from Germany's defeat in the World War I. However, the party-led governments had been more concerned with growing the economy and

⁵⁸ Ibid., 76-77.

engaging peacefully in the post-war international system, and as a result did not provide the military with the funding it desired, nor was the military satisfied with the parties' priorities. The marginalization of military interests also exacerbated tensions between the navy and the army, as they were forced to compete for funding. The combined tensions with the party governments and between the two branches of the military contributed to the frustration of military officers, which was largely directed at the political parties and the institution of party government in general.⁵⁹ As a result, the weakness of the parties in the early 1930s motivated military leaders to increase their control over government in order to pursue their own priorities.

The military had already been in a powerful enough position in the government by 1930 that it was able to take more control after the failure of the political parties. By law, the ministers of war and the navy were active military officers of their respective branches, which meant that higher ranking officers maintained control over their ministers in the cabinet, and were somewhat able to influence military policy.⁶⁰ In the early 1930s, the political turmoil and international issues set the stage for the military's larger role in governance and society at large. In 1931, army officers in Manchuria orchestrated an attack on their own railroad in order to blame Chinese troops and initiate an invasion and subsequent occupation of Manchuria, which became known as the 'Manchurian Incident.'⁶¹ While not sanctioned by the government or head military officers, the invasion dragged Japan into international conflict, which gave the military

⁵⁹ Ann Waswo, *Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 83-84.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 79-81.

⁶¹ Christopher Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction*, 78.

more authority in the affairs of the state. Young officers also took action to restore political authority to the emperor by participating in the assassinations of political leaders, and by the time the higher ranking officers reestablished control over the insubordinate troops, the military had *de facto* taken control of the government through supra-cabinet bodies that had been established to create closer contact between the military and the government.⁶²

The turmoil in domestic politics led to issues in Japan's foreign affairs as well. Following the occupation of Manchuria, Japan established the puppet state of Manchukuo to maintain control over its new territory. The League of Nations was quick to condemn Japan's actions, prompting Japan to leave the League and thereby isolating itself from the international community and becoming more reliant on its own military strength.⁶³ Japan's international situation resulted in the military continuing to grow in strength, which meant that it was more free to pursue its own agenda. Under the military's leadership, Japan once again invaded China in 1937, escalating the conflict that had begun in Manchuria, and allying itself with Nazi Germany and Italy in World War II. During the war, Japan invaded Allied colonial possessions in Southeast Asia, under the pretext of liberating other Asian peoples and uniting them under the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,' but in reality only replacing European with Japanese rule, which was often repressive and brutal, and the Japanese military committed numerous atrocities that continue to haunt Japan. Japan later attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, attempting to keep the U.S. from entering the war, which backfired

⁶² Ann Waswo, *Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994*, 82-86.

⁶³ Christopher Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction*, 78.

and ultimately led to Japan's defeat with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945.

Japan was driven to war largely because the military used its power to instill nationalist sentiment in the broader Japanese population in order to gain support for its war efforts. The escalation of conflicts abroad in the 1930s allowed the military to gain more and more power, without public resistance, through the supra-cabinet bodies, which became the real centers of government power during the wartime period.⁶⁴ In addition, with greater influence over government, military officers began to serve as cabinet officials and prime ministers, effectively replacing the political parties as the drivers of domestic policy.⁶⁵ Following the escalation of conflict in Manchuria, the military acted to control the media in relation to military issues, requiring official approval before publication. The military also moved to garner widespread public support for its war in China, which included the "spiritual mobilization" of the people for the war effort, as well as the censorship and elimination of anti-war ideologies.⁶⁶ The military utilized State Shinto once more, using the emperor as a symbol in order to unite the Japanese population into a single body, which would make it easier to control and mobilize for the war effort.⁶⁷ The military's control of the population resulted in a period of widespread ultranationalist sentiment across Japanese society that became deeply tied to the nation's war effort and ingrained in the national consciousness of the time.

⁶⁴ Ann Waswo, *Modern Japanese Society, 1868-1994*, 86.

⁶⁵ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa times to the Present*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 195.

⁶⁶ Richard Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 160-163.

⁶⁷ Delmer Brown, *Nationalism in Japan*, 211.

Showa era: post-war (1945-1989)

Following the war, Japan was immediately occupied by the United States from 1945 to 1952, and this period saw major transformations of Japanese national institutions. The 1890 Meiji Constitution was replaced with a new constitution, which simultaneously relegated the emperor to a ceremonial role by transferring all real political authority to the National Diet, and completely abolished Japan's military. The Allies also oversaw the International Military Tribunal for the Far East from 1946 to 1948, which put Japan's wartime leaders on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The trial has been criticized, like its predecessor, the Nuremberg Trials, for being a form of victor's justice over the defeated Japan. Many of Japan's political leaders were found guilty of war crimes, including former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, who was ultimately executed. Notably, however, U.S. General MacArthur kept the tribunal from trying Emperor Hirohito, despite evidence that he was directly involved in the wartime decision-making processes. MacArthur felt that the emperor was a necessary symbol, without whom it would be difficult or impossible to govern Japan, although some scholars have claimed that sparing the emperor from punishment undermined democratization efforts in Japan.⁶⁸ Ultimately, MacArthur's plan was to eliminate fascism and militarism from Japanese public life, implementing multiple other reforms in order to foster a more liberal and democratic sentiment in Japanese society.

With the beginning of the Cold War, however, the goals of the occupation began to shift in order to better aid U.S. interests in Asia. As the political left strengthened in

⁶⁸ Christopher Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A very Short Introduction*, 91-93.

Japan (with help from some of MacArthur's own reforms), the U.S. became concerned with the spread of communism instead of fascism, and set about suppressing left-wing political movements. Relatedly, the Japanese economy was suffering from extreme inflation, which also concerned U.S. officials about Japan's potential to fall to communism, and thus, the occupation's agenda included strengthening Japan's economy to secure U.S. interests in Japan as a bulwark against communism in Asia.⁶⁹

Rather than U.S. policy, however, it was the Korean War (1950-1953) which strengthened Japan economically and pushed it even closer into the U.S. sphere of influence. Even though Japan could not directly participate in the fighting, materially assisting the U.S. and allied war effort resulted in a massive economic boom for Japan, which was able to rapidly increase its exports and production, and brought about rapid economic growth.⁷⁰ Japan also began to somewhat remilitarize in 1950, under the direction of the U.S. occupation authorities, which ultimately evolved into the Self-Defense Forces in 1954, which is not formally a military force, but remains in place to defend Japan from attack. The Korean War also ultimately brought about the end of the U.S. occupation. In order to fully establish Japan as an ally in the Cold War, the San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed in 1951, signalling Japan's rehabilitation into the international community and formally ending the occupation in 1952, and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was signed the same day, cementing Japan's relationship with the U.S. that continues to this day.⁷¹ The San Francisco Peace Treaty was controversial at the time,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 97-98.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 98.

⁷¹ Ibid., 99-100.

and continues to have international repercussions today, which will be detailed in the next chapter.

Following the Korean War, and with its new independence, Japan began to take steps to strengthen its economy, which resulted in what is commonly referred to as an ‘economic miracle.’ In 1950, Japan’s GNP was 11 billion dollars, and by the end of the war had increased by 250%.⁷² Further government spending led to a massive boom in industry, and GNP tripled between 1960 and 1971, and Japan became the third largest economy in the world at the time.⁷³ This constituted a dramatic change in Japan’s condition, having been exceptionally weak economically just after the end of World War II.

Up to this point, nationalism had been severely weakened in the post-war era, having no real foothold in public discussion. Japan’s defeat had shattered the societal self-confidence that nationalist fervor had instilled in the public, and anything relating to the nationalist attitudes of the militaristic past was shunned.⁷⁴ This is not to say it did not exist at all: Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, who had been arrested and held as a Class A war criminal suspect (but never tried), attempted to return Japan to its more nationalist past, including attempting to revise the 1947 constitution and to reinstate pre-war nationalist symbols, such as the Rising Sun Flag and the Imperial national anthem, *kimigayo*, which garnered significant opposition from Japanese society.⁷⁵ Most

⁷² Ibid., 98.

⁷³ Ibid., 102-03.

⁷⁴ Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), 136-9.

⁷⁵ Christopher Goto-Jones, *Modern Japan: A very Short Introduction*, 109.

significantly, his revision of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, which aimed to increase Japan's responsibility for its own military defense, was met with massive and widespread protest from different segments of society, who viewed it as violating Japan's newfound pacifist nature. Although Kishi passed the revised treaty through political manipulation, it cost him his resignation as prime minister.⁷⁶ The intensity with which Kishi was opposed demonstrates Japan's general hostility towards nationalism in the early post-war era.

However, Japan's economic growth created an environment where nationalist perspectives were once again able to be part of the public discourse. The dramatic shift in Japan's economic strength, coupled with Japan's security alliance with the United States, boosted Japan's position in the international community, and as such society's self-confidence increased with it.⁷⁷ Nationalists began to promote ideas about the superiority of the Japanese nation and its people as evidenced by its rapid economic growth and prosperity. Scholarly writing about Japanese superiority was known as *Nihonjinron* ('Theories on the Japanese'), which had its roots in the early nationalism of Japan's modern era, and in the generally prosperity of the 1960s and early 1970s, it was an attractive school of thought for many Japanese readers.⁷⁸ In addition, Japan's industrial advancement began to attract immigrant workers in the 1980s, mostly from Southeast Asia and South America. The pressures of foreign immigration combined with Japan's post-war economic experience once again brought up questions about the Japanese identity in societal consciousness, and *Nihonjinron* provided answers. This gave

⁷⁶ Ibid., 109-10.

⁷⁷ Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 139-141.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

nationalists a platform to promote their platform without the backlash that had been present in the early post-war era. Even after *Nihonjinron* lost its popularity, the ideology it espoused had already settled in the national consciousness, allowing nationalists to maintain their position in the public discourse, and their influence continues to this day.

Conclusion

Japan's modern history has been defined by cycles of nationalism and national development, beginning with the Meiji era. The Meiji leaders of Japan set out to use nationalism in order to build a Japanese nation, for the sake of its survival in the face of Western imperialism. The nationalism born in the late nineteenth century eventually faded somewhat in the aftermath of World War I, only to be replaced by an even more aggressive form in the 1930s, which led Japan down the road to total war and eventually total defeat. In the post-war era, Japan was able to reconstruct itself, with some help from the U.S. occupation, and soon after become one of the most economically prosperous states in the world. While nationalism had generally died down in the general public during and immediately after the occupation, it survived and reemerged in the 1970s, and has steadily remained present in the public discourse since, even if it is not wholeheartedly accepted by the majority of society, and remains influential in the political sphere. Having now addressed the history of nationalism in Japan, the next chapter focuses on its relevance in Japanese society today, and the contexts it exists within.

Chapter 3: Contemporary Context

Having established the historical influence and nature of Japanese nationalism, I will now address Japan's current sociopolitical contexts. This chapter begins with an overview of the Japanese political system, followed by a political history of Japan in the post-war era, which largely overlaps with the history of the Liberal Democratic Party, which has been in power for all but five years total since 1955. It then moves on to describe other key areas of Japan's domestic context, particularly exploring its current economic situation, as well as the status of women and minorities. The chapter ends with an explanation of Japan's status within its regional and international relationships and positions. By exploring Japan's sociopolitical contexts, it becomes easier to understand the stances taken by nationalists and the ways in which they are able to influence Japanese politics and society.

Japan's Political System

Political Institutions

Japan's current political system was established by the 1947 constitution, which has remained unamended since its promulgation. Under the constitution, the National Diet (*kokkai*) is the "highest organ of state power," and the "sole law-making organ of the State."⁷⁹ The Diet is split into two chambers, modeled after the British parliamentary system with a Lower House and an Upper House; the House of Representatives and

⁷⁹ THE CONSTITUTION OF JAPAN,
https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html.

House of Councillors, respectively. Both Houses are required to pass identical pieces of legislation before they are made into law, with the exception of the budget, the ratification of treaties, and the selection of the prime minister, which all fall under the ultimate control of the House of Representatives, making it the more powerful body of the two. The prime minister is elected by a majority vote of the members of the House of Representatives, typically the ruling party or coalition, and leads the executive branch. The prime minister has the power to appoint members of the cabinet, who may or may not be members of the Diet, and the cabinet puts forward legislation for the Diet to vote on. The Supreme Court has the power of judicial review to determine the constitutionality of laws passed by the Diet, although it has rarely chosen to do so, generally preferring to stay away from contradicting the government.⁸⁰

Election System

Under the former election system in Japan (1946-1993), members of the Diet were elected by single non-transferable vote (SNTV), in which voters cast one vote in a district that would elect several representatives. There was no limit to how many candidates could run for a party, except limits placed by party resources. The current election system was established in 1994, aimed at fixing issues of malapportionment and misrepresentation. This system is organized into a parallel system of semi-proportional representation: single-seat constituencies and party-list proportional representation. In single-seat constituencies, one member is elected by popular vote in a local constituency.

⁸⁰ David S. Law, *Why Has Judicial Review Failed in Japan?*, 88 Wash. U. L. Rev. 1425 (2011). Available at: http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_lawreview/vol88/iss6/3, 1426.

In 11 multi-member constituencies, voters choose a party, and members are selected from party-provided lists of candidates based on the proportion of votes cast for each party.

The House of Representatives consists of 465 seats, 289 of which are elected from single-seat constituencies and 176 that are elected by proportional representation, and members serve for four years, although the prime minister has the power to dissolve the Lower House and call a general election at any time. The House of Councillors has 242 members, and each serve a six year term. Half of the members (121) are elected in each election every three years, 73 of whom are elected from the prefectural districts and 48 of whom are elected from a national party list by proportional representation.

The Japanese election system also relies heavily on a politician's personal connections to people and their access to money. The LDP has maintained a strong advantage on both fronts, which has allowed them to remain in power almost uninterrupted since the 1950s. LDP candidates often maintain loyal bases of voters assured to vote for them, relying on their personal connections to members of their constituencies. One example of this is the *koenkai* ('local support group'), which operate as personal support groups of politicians, primarily in the LDP, to assist with campaigning, cultivating support for a candidate, rather than a party. This has had another consequence in creating various political dynasties, in which family members are able to inherit these support systems. Large sums of money flow through these support systems and campaigns in general, which has created an environment of corruption, which reforms have attempted to tackle over the past couple of decades, to varying results.⁸¹

⁸¹ J. A. A. Stockwin, *Governing Japan: Divided Politics in a Major Economy*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 174-76.

Organizations (i.e. industries and companies) loyal to candidates or parties also mobilize in elections to generate support for their chosen candidate, which also disproportionately benefits the LDP.⁸² The evolution of Japanese electoral politics will be detailed later in this chapter.

Policymaking

When it comes to policy making and agenda setting, scholarship has been divided on where the true power lies in Japanese governance. The government, led by the cabinet and prime minister, obviously has the final say on whether policy is instituted and bills are brought to the Diet. However, when it comes to the actual drafting of policies and bills, the bureaucracy does most of the work. Each ministry is largely independent from the others, save for the ministers that report to the prime minister, and each has its own interests to protect in creating policy.⁸³ Relatedly, each ministry deals with different industries, and a relatively independent bureaucracy has fostered an issue of regulatory capture, in which bureaucrats create policies that are supported by industries they are supposed to oversee, and then retire from government and land powerful positions at companies they previously regulated (*amakudari*, lit. descent from heaven).⁸⁴ This has given corporations and other powerful interest groups relative control over the policymaking process of Japan.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Gregory W. Noble, "The Evolution of the Japanese Policymaking System," In *The Routledge Handbook of Japanese Politics*, edited by Alisa Gaunder, 249-60, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 250.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Post-war Political History and LDP Success

In the immediate post-war period, the Allies (primarily US) held the role of the ultimate authority in Japan, while taking steps to reinstitute Japanese self-governance through the new constitution. The occupation set the stage for the Japanese political landscape for the next few decades. For example, General MacArthur, while overseeing the occupation, initially backed the formation of a Japanese labor movement, but as tensions rose with the Soviet Union, later became interested in suppressing the left in order to limit the spread of communism.⁸⁵ The impact has been a consistently weak Japanese political left and the dominance of the political right.

In 1955, the Liberal Party and the Democratic Party merged, creating the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and beginning almost 40 years of continuous government control, which came to be known as the 1955 system. Stemming from the merger of parties, the LDP was and continues to be comprised of multiple factions, which cycle through the party presidency/Prime Ministership, and as a result has never held a completely uniform party platform, beyond general conservatism and anti-communism and anti-leftism more broadly. The LDP has also never been popular, rarely garnering public approval rates above 50%.⁸⁶ That said, the LDP was able to draw consistent support from rural constituencies to maintain their governing majority, in large part

⁸⁵ Yong Wook Lee, "The Origin of One Party Domination: America's Reverse Course and the Emergence of the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2004): 371-413, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23258199>, 372-73.

⁸⁶ Steven R. Reed, "The Liberal Democratic Party," In *The Routledge Handbook of Japanese Politics*, edited by Alisa Gaunder, 14-23, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 14.

because of the kinds of policies it pursued. Even without a cohesive platform, the LDP engaged in pork-barrel politics that directed funding and development projects to rural communities.

The 1955 system also saw the gradual decline of the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), which served as the most influential organization of the Japanese political left and the traditional head of the opposition to the LDP. As the LDP maintained its hold on power in government, it was able to weaken the JSP by passing policies that prevented the left from establishing itself in a strong position to govern at all.⁸⁷ As Japan experienced dramatic economic growth and prosperity through the 1960s and 70s, the JSP was also unable to convince the electorate of its proposed economic policy changes, and by extension political transfer of power.

The LDP also held an advantage over other parties in the previous Japanese election system. Under the previous system, the LDP had the ability and the party infrastructure to run several candidates in every constituency, ensuring that they were able to maintain a majority in the Diet. Personal networks were important to distinguish LDP candidates from each other, and this system consistently elected multiple LDP candidates per district.⁸⁸ Other parties lacked the resources to run in every district, let alone several, preventing any major opposition force from emerging and maintaining itself.⁸⁹ An opportunity for reform came in 1993, when the LDP briefly lost its majority in the House of Representatives, and a coalition government comprised of 8 parties was

⁸⁷ Ibid., 19-20.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 17-18.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

able to pass comprehensive election reform, establishing the current system. The coalition quickly fell apart afterwards, and the LDP was able to regain its position in the government in the next election in 1994. The LDP was also able to effectively destroy its formerly most important opponent by entering into a coalition with the JSP in 1994, giving them the first prime minister since 1948, while every cabinet post was filled by a member of the LDP. This coalition served as the end of the JSP, weakened to the point of ineffectiveness by the LDP and mass defections. However, the changes to the election system remained in place, and it was hoped that the new system would allow for a two-party system to emerge and supply meaningful opposition to the LDP. While it did result in fairer representation in the Diet, the LDP was still able to retain its grip on power.

By the late 1990s, the LDP was again facing significant opposition from the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which had formed during the 1996 general election. The general public was also becoming eager for political reform, in the face of economic stagnation that the LDP had yet to fix. In order to remain in power, the LDP elected Junichiro Koizumi as prime minister in 2001, a ‘maverick’ who immediately set about reforming the LDP in an attempt to adapt it for the new national electoral landscape, threatening to destroy the LDP if it refused reform. Koizumi broke the mold of the LDP’s traditional factional consensus-making style with loose party discipline by pushing his own policy agenda, primarily privatization of the postal service, contrary to the general lack of clear LDP policy. When his postal reform failed in the Diet, Koizumi dissolved the House of Representatives and refused to nominate members who had voted against

his policy and instead brought in new candidates that pledged to support him. As a result, Koizumi's tactics and subsequent popularity resulted in a landslide victory for the LDP, with which he was able to push through his agenda.⁹⁰ After his retirement, however, the LDP reverted back to its old methods, and three ineffective prime ministers (including current PM Shinzo Abe) and three years later, public dissatisfaction cleared the way for the DPJ to take power in 2009.

The DPJ won on a platform focused on eliminating the corruption that had set in under the LDP, primarily by reducing the role of the bureaucracy in creating policy and increasing the role of elected Diet members in the cabinet. While the DPJ was able to reduce the power of the bureaucracy, the result was inexperienced cabinet members unable to effectively create policy and an inability to address the rest of the party's platform.⁹¹ After three prime ministers in three years without a general election, the LDP was returned to power in 2012, and Shinzo Abe was re-elected as prime minister, a position he has held since. The LDP has also governed in coalition with the Komeito, a smaller conservative party, in order to maintain a supermajority in the Diet.

On their return to government, the LDP continued with their previous methods of policy making, although Abe has also pursued his own agenda, primarily rooted in nationalist ideology, which will be detailed later in this chapter. Abe has focused on staying in power, calling elections at moments of weakness for the opposition. The most recent election as of this writing, the 2017 General Election, kept Abe and the LDP in power and led to a significant party realignment. A large portion of the DPJ split into the

⁹⁰ Gregory W. Noble, "The Evolution of the Japanese Policymaking System," 256.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 257.

Constitutional Democratic Party, and the remainder eventually merged into a new party, and a rival conservative party, led by Tokyo governor and former cabinet member (during Abe's first term) Yuriko Koike, the Party of Hope. Koike formed the Party of Hope as a response to Abe not being hardline enough in foreign affairs, and although the party was largely unsuccessful in the election (due to poor campaigning), Koike generated significant public excitement and popularity at the start of the campaign.⁹²

Domestic, Regional, and International Contexts

Domestic/Societal Context

Although Japan remains one of the world's largest economies, it has been experiencing economic stagnation since the 1990s. 1991 saw the beginning of a deflationary period that lasted over 20 years that resulted in significant shrinking of the economy. Japan is continuing to recover from its economic woes, currently led by Prime Minister Abe and his economic policies (referred to as Abenomics), a combination of monetary easing, fiscal stimulus, and structural reforms.⁹³ While the economy has begun growing modestly and consistently in recent years, inflation has remained lower than the government's goal, and Japan's future economic prospects are weak, hampered by demographic changes and issues of discrimination. Japan's population has begun to

⁹² Nikkei Staff Writers, "Meet Yuriko Koike -- Tokyo Governor, Leader of New Party of Hope," *Nikkei Asian Review*, September 26, 2017, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Meet-Yuriko-Koike-Tokyo-governor-leader-of-new-Party-of-Hope>.

⁹³ Silvia Merler, "Abenomics, Five Years In: Has It Worked?," *World Economic Forum*, January 10, 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/01/abenomics-five-years-in-has-it-worked>.

shrink in recent decades, as a result of a declining birthrate, which has, coupled with an increasingly aging population, created labor shortages and a large economic burden on younger workers to care for the elderly members of society, which is only projected to get worse.⁹⁴

Women

Women in Japan are subject to societal expectations that limit their abilities to participate as fully in the economy as men. The structure of Japanese society generally relies on men to work in order to provide for their families, and while women may work part-time for extra income, they are generally expected to take care of the family as a housewife. Women are not barred from working by law, and many work in professional settings, although their jobs are still often gendered in nature, but once they are married and have children, are expected to quit to stay in the home. As a result, women have a significantly lower economic participation rate than men.⁹⁵ In addition, women hold very few top positions in private companies, and have very little representation in government, holding only about 10 percent of seats in the Lower House and 20 percent in the Upper House.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ "Japan's Economic Outlook in Five Charts," IMF, November 28, 2018, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/11/27/na112818-japans-economic-outlook-in-five-charts>.

⁹⁵ "Labor Force Participation Rate, Female (% of Female Population Ages 15-64) (modeled ILO Estimate)." The World Bank. September 2018. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.ACTI.FE.ZS?end=2018&locations=JP-US&start=2010&view=chart>.

⁹⁶ Sakura Murakami, "Japan Fails to Shine in Annual Report on Women's Participation in Politics," The Japan Times, March 7, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/03/07/national/japan-fails-shine-annual-report-womens-participation-politics/#.XJfX1ZhKhPY>.

Ethnic Minorities

The Ainu are the indigenous people of northern Japan, having lived there for thousands of years. The Ainu struggled against the ethnic Japanese people for centuries to preserve their land against Japanese expansion, and remained autonomous well into the Tokugawa era. In the early nineteenth century, the shogunate claimed control over the rest of Ainu territory as a protectorate, and did not pursue any policies directly against the Ainu. However, the Meiji government declared the land to be part of Imperial Japan, and proceeded to colonize the territory with their own population. This displaced native Ainu populations and the Ainu population declined significantly by the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The Meiji government also pursued an aggressive assimilation agenda against the Ainu, attempting to incorporate them into the Japanese population. This included policies to criminalize their culture, forced relocation, forced adoption of Japanese names, and overall the destruction of the Ainu way of life. Exploitation of the Ainu continued well into the twentieth century, even in the years following World War II.⁹⁷

The legacy of forced assimilation continues today in the official and societal attitudes toward the Ainu. The word ‘Ainu’ itself became a pejorative term, and they are principally seen as a less than civilized people and commonly discriminated against, particularly in marriage and other social situations. The government briefly recognized the Ainu as a separate culture in 1950, but rescinded it in 1953 until 1987, effectively ignoring their existence. The effect this had on society is demonstrated by how little

⁹⁷ John Lie, *Multiethnic Japan*, 89-93.

Japanese people know about the Ainu; as of 1993, only one of over twelve high school textbooks surveyed even mentioned the Ainu, and many Japanese people believe them to be nearly extinct. The disenfranchisement and neglect of the Ainu people have left many of them in poverty, with low levels of educational achievement among the Ainu population. As a result of the stigma surrounding the Ainu, only recently has there been a movement for Ainu pride, which has actually resulted in an increase in the Ainu population, only because more and more of them have been willing to identify as such, although that pride has not had much of an impact on mainstream Japanese society.⁹⁸

The Ryukyu people, now commonly referred to as Okinawans, also face a similar erasure by the Japanese government, although in a somewhat different context. The Ryukyu Islands were formerly an independent nation until they were annexed by the Meiji government in the 1870s as Okinawa province. The Okinawans were subject to a similar assimilation campaign by the Meiji government, driven in part by a belief that Okinawans were already essentially Japanese; the Okinawan language was considered a dialect of the Japanese language, despite evidence to the contrary, and was banned, as were other aspects of Okinawan culture. Despite the Japanese government's efforts to integrate Okinawans into Japan, and even after successfully changing Okinawans' self-perceptions to view themselves as Japanese, they still were subject to discrimination in mainland Japan. In the eyes of Japanese people, Okinawans were still a minority that were inferior to the Japanese, and as a result were discriminated against in employment and wage earnings. In World War II, derogatory attitudes towards Okinawans remained,

⁹⁸ Ibid., 93-94.

and in the battle of Okinawa, over a fourth of the Okinawan civilian population died, with evidence to suggest that the Japanese military convinced or forced many Okinawans to commit suicide rather than surrender to the U.S. government, which remains a contentious issue today.⁹⁹

After World War II, Okinawa was occupied by the U.S. until it was returned to Japan in 1972. This presence of the U.S. military in Okinawa, and the tensions surrounding it, fostered anti-American sentiment among the Okinawan population, which continues today and is ignored by the Japanese government in its dealings with the U.S., which contributes to tensions between Okinawa and the Japanese government. Ironically, since the end of the U.S. occupation, there has been a shift in Okinawan sentiments regarding their own identity separate from Japan, while Japanese people have come to view Okinawans as Japanese, a reversal from the pre-war era.¹⁰⁰ This contributes to the erasure of the Okinawans' unique cultural and ethnic identities, as well as their separate desires and needs from those of mainland Japan, which the national government also continues to ignore.

Ethnic Koreans have a more recent presence in Japan, but they face similar struggles to other ethnic minorities. After Japan colonized the Korea at the beginning of the twentieth century, the government once again pursued the assimilation of their new subjects into the empire. During the colonization period, many Koreans migrated to Japan to fill the demand for cheap labor, but despite the official policy of 'Japanization' on the Korean Peninsula and the official status of Koreans as Japanese subjects, they were still

⁹⁹ Ibid., 95-99.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 99-101.

disliked and considered inferior by the Japanese population. Even so, the Korean population in Japan increased rapidly, numbering around 348,000 in 1920, and increasing five times more by 1939. The state recruited more Korean workers, sometimes conscripting forcefully, for the war effort during the 1930s; by 1944 the Korean population in Japan reached its height of about 2.4 million, with about half of them estimated to have been forcefully relocated.¹⁰¹

After the war, about two-thirds of the Korean population returned to the Korean peninsula, the rest remaining for various reasons, some outside of their control, concentrated in pockets of communities. However, their Japanese citizenship was stripped from them after the war, and as Japan does not adhere to citizenship by birth, their descendants are also considered foreigners. The lack of citizenship left ethnic Koreans ineligible for government and corporate jobs, leaving them in relative poverty, and in the 1950s were considered the most disliked group in Japan.¹⁰² Even though there have been improvements in the condition of ethnic Koreans in Japan as time has gone on, and many younger Koreans have become naturalized citizens, they still face discrimination in society, and often hide their ethnic identity to avoid discrimination in, for example, employment or marriage.

Foreign Workers

Foreign workers make up a significant portion of the non-Japanese population, and also are one of the most frequent subjects of public discourse about foreigners. Most foreign workers are from Southeast Asia or South America, and migrate to Japan for

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 105-107.

¹⁰² Ibid., 107-109.

lower wage jobs that Japanese workers themselves do not want, often ‘3K jobs’ (*kitsui*, *kitanai*, and *kiken*, or difficult, dirty, and dangerous). This migration began in the 1980s, following its economic boom, and the influx sparked debate in the media about whether or not Japan should accept so many foreigners into the country. Even as more and more Japanese people accepted that as a wealthy country, there would be more foreign immigration, the debate continued as to what it meant for Japan’s national identity and culture if more non-Japanese people continue to live in Japan, despite the fact that foreign workers make up a miniscule portion of Japan’s population.¹⁰³

Regional Contexts

Much of Japan’s regional geopolitical position in East Asia in recent decades has stemmed from its role as an aggressor in World War II, especially in its relations with China and the Koreas. Following the war, Japan initially only reestablished relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) in 1952. Neither the People’s Republic of China nor either of the Koreas were invited to sign the San Francisco Peace Treaty.¹⁰⁴ As a result, relations with the People’s Republic of China were not normalized until 1971, and relations with South Korea were normalized in 1965, after almost 15 years of tension in attempting to resolve issues left over from Japan’s colonial rule over Korea. In more recent years, recurring issues continue to plague Japan’s relationships with China and Korea, particularly regarding territorial disputes and differences in historical memory.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 15-19.

¹⁰⁴ Kimie Hara, "50 Years from San Francisco: Re-Examining the Peace Treaty and Japan’s Territorial Problems," *Pacific Affairs* 74, no. 3 (2001): 361-82, doi:10.2307/3557753, 370-375.

Territorial Disputes

The dispute with South Korea over the island of Dokdo/Takeshima remains unresolved because it was not specifically mentioned in the San Francisco Peace Treaty in resolving territorial issues. South Korea maintains official control over the islands, but both countries dispute each others' claims to the islands, and the U.S., which is in the best position to mediate the dispute, has yet to take a side. South Korea also still uses the "MacArthur Line" that administratively separated Takeshima/Dokdo from the rest of Japan during the occupation, even though the line ended with the occupation, making it more difficult to resolve the dispute.¹⁰⁵ With regard to China, Japan is in dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, northeast of Taiwan. The Japanese claim the islands as part of Okinawa prefecture, and while their possession was never specified by treaty, it was generally accepted that the islands were part of Okinawa, and the U.S. accepted that claim during their administrative control over Okinawa. However, the Republic of China refused to recognize Japan's claim over Okinawa entirely, and the People's Republic of China began to claim the islands after the reversion of Okinawa back to Japan.¹⁰⁶ Both of these disputes are part of the legacy of Japan's colonial period, as well as U.S. influence during the post-war occupation, and the remaining tensions make resolutions difficult and continue to be sore spots in diplomatic relations.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 376

Historical Memory

Another issue in Japan's relations with its neighbors stems from conflicts over historical memory of Japan's imperialist past. In China, this issue stems mostly from the war crimes committed by the Japanese military during World War II, especially the Nanking massacre, while Korea's issues extend to Japan's colonial rule over the peninsula. The main tensions revolve around Japan's refusal to properly acknowledge its responsibility for or pay reparations for its actions. In China, this is primarily in relation to the Nanking Massacre, while in Korea the "comfort women" issue takes center stage. Even though Japan has acknowledged its responsibility through the San Francisco Treaty, there are nationalist elements of Japanese society, including in the ranks of politicians, that deny either Japan's responsibility or that the crimes ever occurred, which heighten tensions between Japan and its neighbors. Although Japan has issued apologies in the past, critics in China and Korea have believed them to be insincere and therefore unacceptable.¹⁰⁷ One element of this issue is how China and Korea often use anti-Japanese sentiment as a political tool to drum up domestic nationalism and support, but Japan has also been unwilling to make necessary concessions to put the issue to rest.

In relation to East and Southeast Asia as a whole, Japan has worked to establish itself as a leader in the region. Japan has given billions of dollars worth of foreign aid to states in Southeast Asia, and has served as a critical investor in development projects. Japan's involvement in Southeast Asia is meant to establish Japanese leadership, as a

¹⁰⁷ Kamiya Matake, "Japanese Foreign Policy toward Northeast Asia," In T. *Japanese Foreign Policy Today*, edited by Inoguchi & P. Jain, 226-250. (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 247-248

counter to Chinese influence, in order to secure Japan's interests and boost its national profile.

International Contexts

Since the end of World War II, Japan has been able to establish itself as a major global power, with a strong economy and important relationships with powerful Western states. The most important of these relationships is with the United States, which has been Japan's chief ally since the end of the occupation in 1952. Under the terms of the security treaty between the two states, the United States has been responsible for Japan's defense needs, and as such has held significant sway with regards to Japan's relations with the rest of the world, especially its neighbors, as described above. Japan's relationship with the U.S. has framed its relations with other states in the context of U.S. foreign policy, which was especially important during the Cold War, which is responsible for Japan's alignment with the West as a liberal democracy.

With a guarantee of defense from the U.S., Japan was able to pursue a foreign policy that was primarily focused on economic growth. As a result, Japan was able to build its economy to be one of the largest in the world, and maintains membership in the G20 (as well as the G7 and G8), keeping a seat at the table where major global economic issues are discussed.

Japan has also worked to develop a global image of importance, as exemplified by its relationship with the UN. Under the UN Charter, Japan is labelled as an 'enemy state' under Article 53, "The term enemy state as used in paragraph 1 of the Article applies to

any state which during the Second World War has been an enemy of any signatory of the present Charter,” serving as an embarrassment that continues today.¹⁰⁸ This distinction had consequences during the Cold War for territorial disputes with the Soviet Union, and while Japan has lobbied for the removal of the clause, politics has prevented it from happening. Japan is also a member of the G4 with Germany, India, and Brazil, a group of states supporting each others’ bids for permanent seats on the UN Security Council.¹⁰⁹ Japan’s international influence has increased in the past decades, but faces pushback on its membership in the permanent membership of the UNSC from South Korea and China. Japan has also nominated a significant number of landmarks and important cultural sites to be considered as UNESCO World Heritage status in an effort improve its international standing and importance.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has gone over the basic information on Japan’s political system and post-war history, as well as the domestic and international political contexts that it inhabits today. The issues laid out in this chapter are interrelated, as domestic politics and society are invariably influenced by and influence Japan’s foreign relations. Nationalism has played a part in Japan’s politics and society throughout the post-war era, even

¹⁰⁸ Hitoki Den, "U.N. Charter's Anachronistic Enemy State Clauses," *The Japan Times*, January 19, 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2017/01/19/commentary/japan-commentary/u-n-chart-ers-anachronistic-enemy-state-clauses/#.XLDhA-hKhPY>.

¹⁰⁹ "UN Security Council - Profile," *BBC News*, August 24, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-11712448>.

¹¹⁰ UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Japan," UNESCO World Heritage Centre, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/jp>.

without widespread popularity, and the issues Japan faces in its political situations are all influenced to some degree by nationalism. The next chapter will detail the specific influence nationalism has had on Japanese policies and the ways they affect human rights in Japan as well as in Japan's foreign affairs.

Chapter 4: Japanese Policies and Human Rights

This chapter delves into specific policies in Japan and their specific impact on human rights. First, it addresses the ways nationalism currently manifests itself in Japanese society today, specifically through Nippon Kaigi, a prevalent nationalist organization. It then details Japanese policies around immigration, citizenship, education, and foreign affairs, what they mean for human rights, and the ways in which the nationalism more generally is evident in those policies. The chapter then moves into the direct influence of nationalist organizations over Japanese policies, and by extension human rights. Through this analysis, I answer my main research question: How do nationalist organizations in Japan influence government policies related to human rights?

Before delving deeper into human rights in Japan, it is important to define what ‘human rights’ means in this context. For the sake of this thesis, ‘human rights’ refers to those rights defined under the international human rights conventions to which Japan is a state party.¹¹¹ Particularly relevant in this thesis are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism (ICERD), although this does not mean that the impact of nationalism is limited to only these rights. Rather, these conventions are the most relevant to the policies that this chapter specifically analyzes, and therefore the most important rights to consider in this thesis.

¹¹¹ "Human Rights, Humanitarian Assistance, Refugees," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human/index.html>.

Nationalism in Japan Today

While Japanese society remains influenced by nationalism from the past, most Japanese people are unsupportive of overt nationalist sentiments and the nationalist agenda.¹¹² That being said, organized nationalism remains present in Japan, with over 1,000 far right groups comprised of over 100,000 members nationwide. The most prominent nationalist organization in Japan is Nippon Kaigi, with about 38,000 members, counting among its membership many prominent right-wing academics, former politicians, and currently elected LDP politicians, including Prime Minister Abe and most of his current cabinet.¹¹³

The Japanese nationalist movement has been built from issues domestically and internationally. The following is a list of Nippon Kaigi's main goals and activities:

Historical perception related

- Justify Japan's war efforts in World War Two
- Oppose Japanese government making apologies for wars and colonialism
- Argue against China on Nanjing Massacre and South Korea on "comfort women"
- Pressure legislators to visit Yasukuni Shrine

Education related

- Promote patriotic education
- Oppose over-emphasizing citizens' rights in education
- Oppose what they call liberal gender education
- Promote loyalty to the state and emperor
- Publish and promote school textbooks that fit its views

¹¹² Koichi Nakano, "Contemporary Political Dynamics of Japanese Nationalism," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 6th ser., 14, no. 20 (October 15, 2016), <https://apjjf.org/2016/20/Nakano.html>.

¹¹³ Daiki Shibuichi, "The Japan Conference (Nippon Kaigi): An Elusive Conglomerate," *East Asia* 34, no. 3 (2017), doi:10.1007/s12140-017-9274-1, 184.

Amendment of constitution/policy related

- Rebuild the armed forces
- Promote the notion of collective self-defense
- Re-designate the emperor as Head of the State (Kokka-genshu)
- Oppose the government project to promote gender equality in the workplace
- Oppose giving voting rights to non-citizens

Imperial institutions and Shinto related

- Legalize the Imperial Calendar (achieved)
- Commemorate the late Shōwa Emperor
- Pressure the government so that mourning and accession ceremonies for emperors should be conducted in the Shinto style
- Pressure the government to organize Shinto-style ceremonies to celebrate the day when the mythical Emperor Jinmu acceded to the throne as Japan's first Emperor
- Oppose female emperor as well as female-line succession of emperors

Custom related

- Oppose legalizing the system of husband and wife retaining separate family names

Foreign relation related

- Oppose subsidies provided by local governments to resident North Korean schools
- Demand North Korea to return Japanese hostages
- Demand North Korea to stop developing WMDs
- Demand China to stop sending government vessels to Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands
- Demand South Korea to return Takeshima/Dokdo island
- Demand Russia to return Northern Territories

Others

- Oppose and criticize leftist/liberal mass media outlets
- Oppose leftist Japan Teachers' Union
- Legalize national flag and anthem (achieved)¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 193-94.

Nippon Kaigi utilizes a variety of methods in order to advance these goals, relying on a grassroots network across the country. This activism includes lecture tours, speeches from propaganda trucks, petitions, publishing numerous books on a range of issues related to their goals, and (generally unsuccessful) lawsuits to silence those who discuss Japanese war crimes.¹¹⁵ Generally, Nippon Kaigi and its associated organizations apply pressure on officials at all levels of government to prevent, for example, education curriculum, from straying away from their ideology. Most importantly, however, are Nippon Kaigi's connections to LDP politicians. Based on the nature of the Japanese policy making and election systems, as described in the previous chapter, access to politicians gives organizations significant sway over the workings of the government, and Nippon Kaigi is no exception. This influence will be further detailed later in this chapter, following a discussion on specific policies maintained by the Japanese government and their impact on human rights.

Policies, Human Rights, and Nationalism

Immigration and Citizenship

Japanese immigration laws are famously strict, and have changed little since the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act was passed in 1951. Even in the face

¹¹⁵ Weiss, Andrew, "Towards a Beautiful Japan: Right-Wing Religious Nationalism in Japan's LDP" (2018), Student Work, 7, https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/ceas_student_work/7, 14-15.

of an aging and shrinking population and workforce, immigration standards, including those for workers, have only been slightly loosened.¹¹⁶ Various programs exist that allow for short-term low skilled employment for foreign workers, for either 1 or 3 years, and most visas are not valid for any longer, which also makes permanent residency difficult to attain given a required 5-10 years of residency. This is easier for foreigners of Japanese descent (*nikkeijin*), who are given special long term visas. Notably, visas are only provided at Japanese consulates or embassies outside, after the applicant is provided a Certificate of Eligibility that demonstrates that they are able to provide for themselves in Japan, and is not “likely to become a burden on the Japanese Government.” This has resulted in low immigration rates through the post-war era, with foreigners making up less than 2 percent of Japan’s population.¹¹⁷

Citizenship is also very selective in Japan, making it difficult for foreigners of little means to obtain Japanese citizenship. Under the Nationality Law of 1950, Japanese citizenship operates under *jus sanguinis* (‘right of blood’), where citizenship is granted only if one or both parents are Japanese citizens at the time of birth, meaning a child born in Japan to two non-citizen parents is not eligible for citizenship. Otherwise, naturalization is available by approval from the Minister of Justice as provided by

¹¹⁶ Simon Denyer and Akiko Kashiwagi, "Japan Passes Controversial New Immigration Bill to Attract Foreign Workers," *The Washington Post*, December 07, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/japan-passes-controversial-new-immigration-bill-to-attract-foreign-workers/2018/12/07/a76d8420-f9f3-11e8-863a-8972120646e0_story.html?utm_term=.078d9b8b235f.

¹¹⁷ Mark Schreiber, "The Face of Immigration Is Rapidly Changing in Japan," *The Japan Times*, February 17, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/02/17/national/media-national/face-immigration-rapidly-changing-japan/#.XIIsIaqBKhPY>.

Articles 4-10 of the Nationality Law. Article 5, paragraph 1 provides the general requirements for naturalization:

The Minister of Justice shall not permit the naturalization of an alien unless he or she fulfills all of the following conditions:

- (1) that he or she has domiciled in Japan for five years or more consecutively;
- (2) that he or she is twenty years of age or more and of full capacity to act according to the law of his or her home country;
- (3) that he or she is of upright conduct;
- (4) that he or she is able to secure a livelihood by one's own property or ability, or those of one's spouse or other relatives with whom one lives on common living expenses;
- (5) that he or she has no nationality, or the acquisition of Japanese nationality will result in the loss of foreign nationality;
- (6) that he or she has never plotted or advocated, or formed or belonged to a political party or other organization which has plotted or advocated the overthrow of the Constitution of Japan or the Government existing thereunder, since the enforcement of the Constitution of Japan.

Under item 5, Japan does not allow for dual citizenship with another state. In the case of a person who is granted a second nationality at birth, they have until their twenty-second birthday to choose one, or two years after acquiring the second nationality if they do so after they turn twenty, as provided by Article 14.¹¹⁸

The combined impact of these immigration and citizenship laws makes it difficult for many foreigners to live in Japan and then stay to become citizens and members of the nation. In the area of immigration, human rights are significantly impacted by Japanese policies in accepting refugees applying for asylum. In 2017, out of over 19,000 applicants, Japan accepted only 20 as refugees.¹¹⁹ In the first half of 2018, it accepted 22

¹¹⁸ THE NATIONALITY LAW,
<http://www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/information/tnl-01.html>.

¹¹⁹ Chisato Tanaka, "Japan's Refugee-screening System Sets High Bar," *The Japan Times*, May 21, 2018,
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/21/reference/japans-refugee-screening-system-sets-high-bar/#.XJPDGKKBkPY>.

of 5,586 applications for refugee status.¹²⁰ The Japanese government claims that such a low acceptance rate stems from the high number of people who are attempting to exploit a loophole in Japan's refugee policies that would allow them to work in Japan, and are not truly refugees.¹²¹ These figures are also somewhat misleading, as the approved applications were submitted years before and had just finished being vetted, according to the head of the Tokyo branch of the UNHCR.¹²² Regardless, even if the government's claims are true and in spite of the fact that the yearly numbers are not correlated, Japan accepts very few refugees, especially compared to other advanced countries.

The fact that there are people attempting to apply for refugee status for the sake of work also provides commentary on the state of immigration policies in Japan. Unskilled workers are all but banned from living and working in Japan other than temporary internship training programs, so their attempts to work in Japan end up somewhat inflating the number of refugee applications. That being said, Japan also has an extremely strict application system, made harder by immigration policies. In addition to needing a visa to enter Japan before arriving, Japan also adheres to strict interpretations of what it means to require asylum, and also places a large burden of proof on asylum-seekers,

¹²⁰ "World Report 2019: Japan," Human Rights Watch, January 17, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/japan>.

¹²¹ Chisato Tanaka, "Japan's Refugee-screening System Sets High Bar," *The Japan Times*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/21/reference/japans-refugee-screening-system-sets-high-bar/#.XJPDGKKBkPY>.

¹²² Tara Francis Chan, "NO ENTRY: How Japan's Shockingly Low Refugee Intake Is Shaped by the Paradox of Isolation, a Demographic Time Bomb, and the Fear of North Korea," *Business Insider*, April 11, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/why-japan-accepts-so-few-refugees-2018-4>.

which is difficult for those who were persecuted in their home countries to provide.¹²³ Japan's immigration laws compounded with the asylum application system make it extremely difficult for refugees to enter and remain in Japan.

In addition to immigration issues, Japan's citizenship laws have also made it difficult for many long-term residents to have their political rights fully realized. For example, the *zainichi* Koreans, several generations of which remain in Japan, are unable to participate in Japanese civil life, particularly in regards to voting, unless they become naturalized citizens. While some local municipalities have allowed *zainichi* to vote in local elections, they still lack the right to vote in national elections, meaning their interests remain unrepresented at the national level. In addition, the stipulation in the Nationality Act requiring "upright behavior" in order to be naturalized has been used in the past to prolong or reject applications from Korean or Chinese permanent residents.¹²⁴ Without the protections of citizenship, non-Japanese residents are subject to discrimination and deprived of civil opportunities available to Japanese citizens, which will be described in more detail in the next section.

The nationalist influence in these policies is clearly evident in the unequal treatment of foreigners attempting to live in Japan. The difficulties immigrants experience in the Japanese immigration system help to perpetuate the small amount of

¹²³ Chisato Tanaka, "Japan's Refugee-screening System Sets High Bar," *The Japan Times*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/21/reference/japans-refugee-screening-system-sets-high-bar/#.XJPDGKBKHPY>.

¹²⁴ Tetsuro Kobayashi, Christian Collet, Shanto Iyengar, Kyu S. Hahn, Who Deserves Citizenship? An Experimental Study of Japanese Attitudes Toward Immigrant Workers, *Social Science Japan Journal*, Volume 18, Issue 1, Winter 2015, Pages 3–22, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ssjj/jyu035>, 5.

non-Japanese people in Japan, which in turn perpetuates the belief in an ethnically homogeneous nation. The continuation of strict immigration controls runs counter to Japan's demographic changes, with a shrinking and aging population, and by extension, a shrinking and aging population. Labor shortages continue, yet the Japanese government has made few changes in allowing more unskilled workers to live and work in Japan. This stems from the desire of the government (the LDP) to maintain the status quo of a 'homogeneous' Japan, which is also supported by the Japanese public.¹²⁵ This ideology is also present in the special status that people of Japanese descent have in immigrating to Japan, even if they have never lived in Japan or do not speak Japanese. The importance of 'blood' in the Japanese immigration system is symptomatic of the larger legacy of nationalism in Japan.

Racial Discrimination

Japan is party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which requires signatories to outlaw racial discrimination in all its forms, including hate speech. Despite being party to the convention since 1974, however, Japan still has no laws that prohibit racial discrimination. In addition, Japan interprets the treaty as not allowing any law that prohibits freedom of speech, and as such has no laws against hate speech either. Multiple UN reports over the years have called for Japan to enact such policies, but what little legislation has been passed has lacked any substantive measures to prevent racial discrimination or racially motivated hate speech.

¹²⁵ Tara Francis Chan, "NO ENTRY," Business Insider, April 11, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/why-japan-accepts-so-few-refugees-2018-4>.

Without concrete legislation against racial discrimination, racial minorities in Japan continue to be deprived of full participation in Japanese society. Discrimination against non-Japanese people, notably ethnic Koreans, Ainu, and Okinawans, have kept minority communities excluded from society and economically disadvantaged. Income and education gaps persist and perpetuate a cycle of economic discrimination. Many Japanese people believe the Ainu are disappearing or already have, and anti-Korean hate speech has been on the rise recently, exacerbated by tensions with North Korea, which means that despite the slow progress that has been made over the past few decades, minorities face significant obstacles to equal participation in Japanese society. Alternatively, Okinawans, who have been labelled as Japanese, continue to struggle against the Japanese government for their own recognition. The Japanese government's unwillingness to cooperate with the Okinawan prefectural government on issues of the U.S. military bases and the Okinawan identity continues to frustrate the relationship between Okinawa and Japan.

The inequality between ethnic Japanese and ethnic minorities is also part of the legacy of modern Japanese nationalism. Ethnicity plays the most important role in the marginalization of minorities in Japan, and the discrimination and acts of hate facing minority communities is a manifestation of the belief in Japan's ethnic homogeneity. The government's inaction, even after several reports over the past few decades highlighting Japan's shortcomings in upholding the rights of minorities and demanding efforts to improve, are demonstrative of the general attitude towards non-Japanese people. In recent years, Governor Koike has declined to send a eulogy to an annual memorial for the

Koreans massacred in the aftermath of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, going against tradition¹²⁶, and local efforts to limit hate speech have been weak¹²⁷, exhibiting general apathy in regards to improving the conditions for minorities.

(History) Education

Japanese history textbooks are infamous for mischaracterizing, providing few details about, or completely omitting Japan's role in World War II and the atrocities committed by the Japanese military. All textbooks require approval from the Japanese government (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, or MEXT) before they can be published for use in schools, and the Ministry has consistently required authors to make edits to their textbooks to downplay Japan's role as a aggressor or deflect blame for the military's actions. Ienaga Saburo's lawsuits against the Japanese government between 1965 and 1997 for censorship are among the most famous examples of history censorship from the Japanese government, but issues persist to this day. In addition, while most history textbooks are not overtly nationalistic, the Ministry did approve the New History Textbook (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho*), written by the Association to Write New History Textbooks (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho o Tsukuru Kai*), in 2001, which was heavily criticized for being extremely nationalistic.

¹²⁶ "Koike Again Skips Eulogy for Koreans Killed after 1923 Quake: The Asahi Shimbun," The Asahi Shimbun, August 09, 2018, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201808090043.html>.

¹²⁷ Drew Ambrose and Sarah Yeo, "Kawasaki Hate Speech: The Rise of Japan's Far Right," Far Right | Al Jazeera, March 02, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/kawasaki-hate-speech-rise-japan-180227114204341.html>.

The result of these shortcomings in Japan's history education is a population that is not properly educated on the Japan's imperialist past and does not engage with issues of historical memory with China and Korea. The ultranationalist reactions to accusations of war crimes against Japan is to deny or minimize responsibility, but the general population, even if they accept Japan's responsibility for the war, does not understand why China and the Koreas are still unsatisfied with the Japanese government's efforts towards reparations and reconciliation. With nationalists leading the government, the nationalist narrative of the war remains in the mainstream political discourse, and the Japanese public's general lack of knowledge about Japan's role in the war makes international dialogue difficult and enables nationalists to continue their narrative. All the while, victims or families of victims of the Japanese military, most notably former comfort women or victims of the Nanking Massacre, continue to wait for a proper apology and acknowledgement of responsibility from the Japanese government, as well as redress to assist with the healing process.

Nationalist sentiment is strong in this area of Japanese policy regarding history, precisely because the leaders of the government hold the same beliefs as prominent nationalist organizations. The fact that history textbooks published by revisionists are approved by MEXT, such as the New History Textbook, while more accurate textbooks are rewritten demonstrates a common interest between nationalists and the government in maintaining a national narrative of denial. By denying responsibility for war crimes committed by the military, nationalists maintain the narrative of an infallible nation, which by extension maintains that Japan's wartime conduct was justified and denies the

importance of the victims' rights. The issues with Japan's history education are perpetuated by the nationalist leadership of the government, and a population that is not fully educated and therefore apathetic, allowing nationalists to remain in power and define education standards. Notably, Japanese teachers often do not end up teaching much of Japan's modern history, including the war, for lack of time and importance on exams. Wartime history has a lack of importance placed on it in Japanese society, which allows for nationalists to keep their position in international debates on historical memory.

Human Rights in Japanese Foreign Policy

Officially, Japan maintains that it pursues "diplomacy based on the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, basic human rights, and the rule of law."¹²⁸ In reality, however, human rights has been given low priority in Japanese foreign policy, especially compared to other liberal democracies. Japan has maintained political and economic relationships, including foreign aid, Japan's favorite tool of foreign relations, with states and regimes that have been known to abuse human rights. Most recently, Japan has given support to Myanmar in its efforts to deflect attention from and fact-finding efforts into the Rohingya crisis.¹²⁹ This follows a pattern of Japan's behavior towards human rights

¹²⁸ "World Report 2019: Japan," Human Rights Watch, January 17, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/japan>.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

abuses in other Asian states, such as continuing trade with China in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square protests, even as Western states called for sanctions.¹³⁰

This has a negative impact on human rights in East Asia. By allowing states and regimes to commit human rights violations without consequences from Japan, it demonstrates that these states will have support from a regional neighbor, and one which has strong relationships with the Western liberal democracies. This enables states with poor human rights records to continue their policies of abuse, which means that people in the region continue to be subjected to harmful policies that cause suffering. Japan's demonstrated apathy towards human rights also means that democratization and human rights efforts in Asia are impeded, and without the support of a regional power, human rights can continue to be painted as a Western imposition of values on non-Western states.

Nationalism plays a more roundabout role in influencing Japanese foreign policy around human rights, with both domestic and international factors. Abroad, Japan aims to more fully integrate itself as a member of the East Asian community, and establish itself as a regional leader.¹³¹ This explains why Japan has often gone against the interests of its Western allies in regards to the importance of human rights. By breaking with its Western allies, Japan places itself in an intermediary role between Asia and the West.¹³² This has included signing the 1993 Bangkok Declaration, which asserts that human rights are not

¹³⁰ David Arase, "Japanese Policy toward Democracy and Human Rights in Asia," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 10 (1993): 935-52, doi:10.2307/2645094, 943.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 948-49.

¹³² *Ibid.*

universal, and should not be imposed on different cultures, in this case those of Asia.¹³³

Japan's support for this perspective is not only part of its goal for regional leadership, but also a belief rooted in nationalist ideology. While Japan's constitution asserts the importance of human rights several times, nationalists have long attempted to reverse that position. The LDP has held that

Rights are gradually generated from the history, tradition, and culture of the community. Accordingly, human rights provisions need to be based on the history, culture, and tradition of our country. There are some provisions in the current constitution that could be viewed as being derived from the European idea that human rights are granted by God. We believe that these provisions need to be revised.¹³⁴

With this position, the LDP makes it clear that human rights should not be universally enforced, and that differences in culture allows for that position. Thus, Japan's proclaimed support for human rights is not demonstrated, at least not fully, by the government's policies and rhetoric.

¹³³ Final Declaration of the Regional Meeting for Asia of the World Conference on Human Rights | ヒューライツ大阪,
https://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/other_documents/section1/1993/04/final-declaration-of-the-regional-meeting-for-asia-of-the-world-conference-on-human-rights.html.

¹³⁴ Shigenori Matsui, "Fundamental Human Rights and 'Traditional Japanese Values': Constitutional Amendment and Vision of the Japanese Society," *Asian Journal of Comparative Law* 13, no. 1 (2018): 59-86, doi:10.1017/asjcl.2017.25, 74.

Nationalist Influence on Human Rights

The combined effect of these policies in Japan is the diminished importance of human rights, not just for non-Japanese people but for all people in Japan. The ‘myth of homogeneity’ continues to be reinforced by narratives of Japan as a homogeneous nation that should remain so, such as the previously mentioned 2005 statement by Taro Aso. These narratives are successful, as the general population remains in favor of maintaining Japan’s ethnic homogeneity, based on various beliefs in the uniqueness of Japan.¹³⁵ The policies for immigration and citizenship make it difficult to change these narratives by keeping non-Japanese people out of Japan or by limiting their ability to participate in society. The continuously low population of non-Japanese people reinforces general apathy among the general population with regard to minority issues, which allows for hate speech and racial discrimination to remain ingrained in society.¹³⁶ This spills over into foreign affairs, where nationalists are able to dominate the discussions in relations with China and the Koreas over historical memory, as well as the importance of human rights in general in Japan’s international relations. All of this creates a reinforcing cycle in which the public’s apathy allows nationalists to exert influence over policies, which further feeds off of public apathy, and the nationalist narrative of traditional values limits the full realization of human rights in Japan.

¹³⁵ Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron*, 139-141.

¹³⁶ Yuka Kitayama, "The Rise of the Far Right in Japan, and Challenges Posed for Education," *London Review of Education* 16, no. 2 (2018): 250-67, doi:10.18546/lre.16.2.06, 262

This influence is not limited only to policies that affect human rights. For example, over the years, Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have been gradually given more and more responsibility and authority in response to various stimuli. In order to create the SDF in the 1950s, Article 9 of the Constitution, which prohibits Japan from maintaining an armed forces, was interpreted as not denying the state the right to self-defense, and thus Japan has been able to maintain what is in essence an armed forces without the ability to operate outside the country. Initially, its primary responsibility was to assist in national emergencies or natural disasters. Since the 1990s, legislation has been passed allowing the SDF to participate in non-combat roles in UN peacekeeping missions and other engagements, such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which has caused controversy over the constitution.

From one perspective, the expanded role of the SDF could mean that Japan could take on a more active role in humanitarian and human rights issues around the world. However, we have seen that Japan is not interested in protecting human rights as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. Rather, the gradual expansion of the SDF contributes to the weakening of Article 9 of the constitution. By reinterpreting Article 9, it opens the door to eventual repeal or amendment to the article and a remilitarized Japan. Whether Japan has the right to a military or not, the reality is that a new Japanese military would heighten tensions with China and the Koreas, still remembering the actions of the Japanese military during World War II. These steps are already being taken, with Abe's

establishment of a marine force to “counter any invasion of Japan.”¹³⁷ The realization of nationalist goals is not unrealistic so long as they remain in power.

Nationalist influence in Japan exists in multiple forms, most obviously in the presence of nationalist organizations, such as Nippon Kaigi. As a network of multiple organizations, Nippon Kaigi has the furthest reach, with members of the Diet, and more importantly, the Cabinet, including the prime minister, counted among its membership. This provides a direct avenue for Nippon Kaigi to influence policy, when it has members or supporters in charge of the policymaking process. This also means that nationalist perspectives are constantly represented in national discussions on policies and society in general; Prime Minister Abe himself has consistently vocalized support for the organization. The way policymaking and elections work in Japan also allows Nippon Kaigi, as an organization, to be involved in the elections and votes of legislators.

According to Daiki Shibuichi, Nippon Kaigi is actually not as influential of an organization as it is painted to be, particularly by Western media. He claims that Nippon Kaigi is not a united organization, but rather a conglomerate of separate branches and organizations with similar goals, and the apparent power of Nippon Kaigi stems from the overlap in ideology with Abe, as well as the decline of other organizations, particularly on the left. He also states that many Diet members join Nippon Kaigi for the sake of networking, rather than ideological alignment, and the overlapping ideology exists only

¹³⁷ "Japan Activates First Marines since World War II to Bolster Defenses against China," CNBC, April 07, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/07/japan-activates-first-marines-since-ww2-to-bolster-defenses-against-china.html>.

on the far right of the LDP.¹³⁸ However, I argue that even if more context demonstrates Nippon Kaigi to be less powerful than it is usually depicted, it still wields considerable influence over policy while the far right, led by Abe, remains in power. Even if that influence is not direct control of politicians, but rather alignment of goals, that still has a significant impact on policy-making, and Nippon Kaigi's resources can be utilized towards realizing those goals in conjunction with the government. In addition, the fact that legislators join Nippon Kaigi despite not being ideologically aligned, simply for the sake of networking and resources, demonstrates that Nippon Kaigi has a significant amount of clout and resources, even if it could be replaced without Abe in power, as Shibuichi claims. More importantly, however, is the fact that nationalism in Japan is larger than just Nippon Kaigi and nationalist politicians.

Japanese nationalism continues to exist today because it feeds off the ethnocentrist nationalist ideas that have their foundations in the Meiji era, and have been maintained throughout Japan's modern history. These ideas, as previously described, do not maintain their influence because most Japanese people fervently believe in them; in fact most would not identify as nationalists, nor do nationalists generally enjoy national popularity. Rather, nationalist notions remain ingrained in Japan's societal institutions. This is illustrated by the persistence of issues surrounding the Japanese identity, especially as it relates to ethnicity. The nationalist notions that established the policies surrounding citizenship and immigration policies, which were meant to maintain Japan's ethnic homogeneity, remain popular in society, with a majority of people believing Japan

¹³⁸ Daiki Shibuichi, "The Japan Conference (Nippon Kaigi): An Elusive Conglomerate," 191-92.

should either maintain or reduce current levels of immigration.¹³⁹ Also, even if most Japanese people do not participate in anti-minority hate speech or demonstrations, the fact remains that non-Japanese people continue to face *widespread* discrimination, when it comes to jobs, housing, marriage, etc., as detailed in Chapter 3. In addition, the fact that nationalist politicians, like Abe, continue to be reelected exemplifies that even if voters do not agree with their beliefs, it has not been enough of an issue to vote them out of office, even when they are unpopular. Taken together, all of these issues point to complacency and apathy of the general Japanese public when it comes to issues of nationalism, which allows those who are nationalists to continue to influence policies and society.

Conclusion

By looking at the effects of Japanese policies on various aspects of human rights, we can see that nationalism has a strong influence over Japanese politics and society. Japanese nationalism takes various forms in exerting this influence. Nationalism maintains a presence in Japanese society, passive though it may be. Nationalist individuals and organizations, like Shinzo Abe and Nippon Kaigi, however, are able to take advantage of this passive nationalism to exert direct influence over policy making, and by extension human rights in Japan. The direct ties between Nippon Kaigi and much of the LDP and Prime Minister Abe's cabinet allow for the organization's direct

¹³⁹ Bruce Stokes, Bruce and Kat Devlin, "Japanese Views on Immigrants, Immigration, Emigration," Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, November 12, 2018, <https://www.pewglobal.org/2018/11/12/perceptions-of-immigrants-immigration-and-emigration/>.

participation in the election and policy making processes, maintaining a public platform from which to promote their views. The combination of public apathy, or at the very least inaction, and an elite-dominated movement allows for nationalists to maintain their power and authority to continue to influence Japanese society.

Conclusion

Taro Aso is not the only one who believes Japan is “one nation, one race,” although his view is the perfect summation of Japanese nationalist sentiment, what they believe Japan is and what they believe it should be. This thesis has demonstrated that even though the majority of the Japanese population does not adhere to right-wing nationalist ideology, that sentiment is still ingrained in Japanese society by virtue of an elite-centered movement, one part of the legacy of Japan’s modern history as a nation-state. History has nurtured nationalism through Japan’s high and low points, through victory and defeat in war, as well as economic boom and bust. In the current day, nationalism persists, represented by nationalist organizations and powerful individuals. More importantly, Japan’s political institutions allow for nationalism to exert influence over laws and policies, and those policies have implications for human rights both within Japan and out.

This thesis started with the research question: How do nationalist organizations in Japan influence government policies related to human rights? The reality is, they are aided in large part by passivity of the Japanese population. Organizations, with the focus of this thesis on Nippon Kaigi, are able to directly involve itself in the policymaking process and in the election of Diet members. With Prime Minister Abe in power, Nippon Kaigi has even more clout that it normally would, with Diet members joining the organization not because of ideological alignment, but the resources and networking that it provides. This does not mean that it has achieved every one of its goals, but its viewpoints are constantly represented in national discussions on any related issue. The

lack of pushback from the general population only enables nationalists to continue to push their agenda and influence public discussion and opinion. This explains, at least in part, the policies, or lack thereof, that maintain the status quo of a homogeneous Japan. These same policies harm the human rights of non-Japanese people in Japan, as well as those in states that Japan enables to abuse human rights, and furthermore limit the full realization of human rights for all people in Japan.

Of course, this thesis has its limitations. This is not a comprehensive analysis of the Japanese nationalist movement, nor does it cover every relevant piece of history or current event. It also does not address every possible impact of nationalism in Japanese society, or every issue pursued by the nationalist movement, such as their views on women and gender more generally. In addition, this thesis views the nationalist movement as a whole, and lacks interaction with individual nationalists, meaning that there are no directly stated opinions nor any reasoning behind or explanation for their beliefs beyond historical trends. This means that there is no way to conclude from this thesis why individuals are driven by nationalist ideologies, or what compels them to push their agenda on the entire nation.

Rather, this thesis is meant to highlight the importance of nationalism in Japanese and that there is a relationship between it and human rights in Japan. By acknowledging the history and the significance of nationalism in Japanese society, the discussion can move past explanations based on culture. This is not to say that culture is not important, but culture can change, and indeed Japanese culture was changed through nationalism, and once again by the U.S. occupation after World War II. By chalking Japanese policies

up to culture, as many Western observers are wont to do, we ignore that possibility of change, as well as the agency of individuals within Japan. While they are relatively weak compared to nationalist organizations, there are organizations and individuals in Japan that are working to resist the nationalist narrative and promote human rights, such as branches of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, among others.

When we move past culture as an explanation, it also opens opportunities to reframe debates around the universality of human rights. Japanese nationalists claim that human rights are not universal, and history and culture must be taken into account when expecting states to implement human rights. I agree. At the same time, however, I also believe that culture can change, or be changed. This is not to say that the West should impose human rights on every state and change the cultures of other nations. Instead, individuals can be given the chance to make those changes, and incorporate a system of human rights that acknowledges their importance within a society. This thesis details the processes by which elites in Japan have developed a national consciousness and policies to support it. With participation from the wider population, that national consciousness could be changed to affirm support for human rights as a Japanese value.

In addition, this thesis can also be applied beyond Japan. The past few years have seen a revival of right-wing nationalism around the world, particularly in the liberal democracies of Europe and the United States. Much commentary from the media focuses on the events that are happening in this historical moment to explain this shift towards nationalism. I argue that it is just as important to understand the history and the roots of nationalism for any nation in order to bring us closer to understanding how to move past

these sentiments and move further towards the full realization of human rights around the world. This thesis brings a more in-depth historical analysis into the conversation, and thus provides more of an explanation for the roots of Japanese nationalism and the human rights issues that stem from it.

Beyond the current status of nationalism and human rights in Japan, there lies another question: what can be done? A stronger anti-nationalist movement in Japan would serve as a counter against nationalist rhetoric and provide more viewpoints. More importantly, however, and as part of an anti-nationalist movement, is education. By educating the public with an unfiltered version of history, and an acknowledgement that nationalism has played a large role in modern Japan and remains influential, Japan can move past debate on what it means to be Japanese, and be more open to the idea that blood does not control one's ability to participate in a nation. This also requires an acknowledgement of the diversity that already exists within Japan, both in terms of minorities and among Japanese people as well. This would not be a straightforward process, as conversations of this scale are invariably messy and complicated. Of course, it would certainly be made easier by a change in the government, but that remains unlikely without a stronger political alternative, and greater active participation from the general Japanese population.

In the future, I believe that it would be beneficial for further research on the possibilities of building an anti-nationalist movement and a strengthening of the Japanese political left. In addition, I think that an in-depth sociological analysis of the Japanese nationalist movement would shed more light on the individual motivations of its

members, particularly the grassroots activists. By addressing these issues on a more individual level, it would be easier to determine what courses of action can be taken in order to minimize participation in the movement and to understand the factors specific to Japan that drive people to engage with nationalism. In addition, this research would benefit from more in depth analysis of the public discourse in Japan around the issues written about in this thesis.

In 2017, *Jacobin* ran an article titled “Abe’s Japan is a Racist, Patriarchal Dream.” It calls for a transnational movement in order to resist the influence of nationalism and the racism and sexism it perpetuates.¹⁴⁰ I disagree, to a degree. Transnational solidarity is important, and would certainly strengthen resistance to nationalist forces around the world. Before that, however, Japanese society needs to decide for itself that nationalism should be resisted, and human rights promoted. It needs to decide that as a whole, it wants to combat the racism and the xenophobia that remain ingrained in its national consciousness. As of now, it is evident that Japan has yet to move past the importance of race in the Japanese identity. This is not a decision that can be made for Japan by other states or nations, for any resulting change would have a weak standing and run the risk of another resurgence of nationalist sentiment. One day, however, maybe Japanese society will make that decision, and the myth of homogeneity be recognized as just that; a myth.

¹⁴⁰ Lisa Torio, "Abe's Japan Is a Racist, Patriarchal Dream," *Jacobin*, March 28, 2017, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/03/abe-nippon-kaigi-japan-far-right>.

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