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**Hegemony, Domination and Opposition:
Fluctuating Korean nationalist politics at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in
PyeongChang**

Jung Woo Lee (University of Edinburgh)

ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with a contested nature of nationalism expressed through sport. The 2018 Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang offers some useful episodes through which a different type of Korean nationalisms being represented via sport can be investigated. At this Winter Olympics, I observed four distinctive discourses on Korean identity being displayed via the winter sporting competition: 1) unified Korean ethnic nationalism, 2) South Korean state patriotic nationalism, 3) postcolonial anti-imperialist nationalism, and 4) cosmopolitan Korean identity. The four variants of nationalism were vying for a dominant position in the hierarchy of South Korean politics, and the Winter Olympics presented a platform on which each nationalist group asserts the legitimacy of their sense of nationhood. Therefore, I conclude that the 2018 Winter Olympics was not simply a physical contest between athletes but more importantly, was a field of the hegemonic struggle between adherents of different nationalistic views.

Keywords: Nationalism, Hegemony, Politics, Korea, PyeongChang, Winter Olympics

Introduction

Despite an increasing awareness of transnational solidarity, a nation continues to provide one of the strongest sources of collective identity in the world today (Bieber 2018, Wellings and Power 2016). Numerous scholars have examined the role that sport plays in the construction and dissemination of nationalism in different regions and contexts (Angelini, et al. 2017, Bairner 2009, Maguire 2011, Scherer and Jackson 2010). Most studies tend to focus on the way in which sport reflects and reinforces a particular type of, frequently a dominant form of, nationalism. However, more recent literature on this topic also implies that sport can carry more than one form of nationalism within an established nation, and that different nationalist groups tend to exploit sport to claim the legitimacy of their sense of nationhood (Dolan and Connolly 2018, Ho and Bairner 2013, Thomas and Antony 2015). In such a case, instead of operating as a unifying force, sport can potentially divide the nation or, at least, it can reinforce an existing political fissure in the country.

This article concerns dominant, oppositional and emerging form of nationalism expressed through sport. The 2018 Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang offers some useful episodes where a different type of Korean nationalisms being represented and contested in sporting arenas can be investigated. A few academics have examined the evolvement of Korean sporting nationalism over time (Cho 2009, Kim 2018, Park, Ok and Merkel 2016). Yet, these studies paid little attention to the way in which sport mirrors the contentious relations between different nationalist groups. Thus, by looking at the circulation of multiple discourses of Korean nationalisms in conflict surrounding the winter sport mega-event, this article intends to extend the academic discussion on Korean sporting nationalism further. This would eventually make a useful contribution to the theoretical literature on sport and nationalism.

PyeongChang 2018 is arguably one of the most politicised Olympics mainly due to the demonstration of the unity between North and South Korea after the escalating military

tensions (Rowe and Lee 2018). Yet, conservative groups in South Korea was not convinced by this symbolic union in the stadium, questioning the intent of communist Korea's rather sudden conciliatory gestures (McCurry 2018). At the same time, the Winter Olympics was a cultural theatre showing cosmopolitan Korean identity being emerged. In addition, anti-Japanism can also be noticed at this event because it took place when Japan and Korea were in a fierce diplomatic dispute (Panda 2018). The representation and circulation of these nationalistic sentiments at the Winter Olympics indicate the complexity of the articulation amongst sport, nationalism and national identity (Topič and Coakley 2010).

The aim of this study is to examine the power struggle between different nationalist politics in Korea during the 2018 Olympic Winter Games. Bairner (2015) stresses that the academic literature on sport and nationalism, instead of being heavily relied on media analysis, needs to present a theoretically informed discussion of nationalism. In this light, this paper will pay attention to some key incidents that reveal the tensions between different variants of Korean nationalism being displayed at the Winter Olympics and will discuss how the demonstration of these nationalist sentiments is related to the shifting power structure and to political ideologies in this country. Then, this study will attempt to conceptualise this fluctuating landscape of nationalist politics and its connection with sport in South Korea.

Nationalism as a field of a hegemonic struggle

While an academic debate on nationalism has been informed by a diverse range of theoretical underpinnings, it is difficult to deny that primordialism and modernism are conventionally the two major theories that significantly influence nationalism studies. Put simply, primordialism considers essential characteristics of particular ethnic groups and their cultural tradition as the origin of nationalism (Geertz 1973, Smith 1986) whereas modernism regards nationalism as a forged political ideology which began to emerge with the

industrialisation in the late eighteenth centuries in Europe and their colonies (Anderson 1991, Gellner 1983). Arguably, Stalin (1913/1994, 20) offers one of the most succinct definitions of the essentialist view: ‘a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifest in a common culture.’ A socio-biological and organic tie between people is the core component of this primordial nationalism (Özkirimli 2000). On the other hand, the modernist view of nationalism states that while a nation as a community may have a historical root, nationalism as a political movement was mainly constructed with the development of industrial capitalism which subsequently led to the formation of modern nation-states (Held 1995). In this nation building process, many cultural conventions were (re)invented and new artificial territorial boundaries are drawn in order to provide a sense of distinctive national characters (Anderson 1991, Hobsbawm 1983).

While the two major theoretical frameworks present a useful intellectual agenda in nationalism studies, the recent identity politics and culture war caused largely by globalisation and immigration make a spectrum of nationalist movement more diverse and more complicated than the conceptualisation that primordialism and modernism offer. To some extent, globalisation, by facilitating the free flow of financial assets and cultural products, weakens the function of the conventional sense of the nation as a sovereign and autonomous political unit although there [is](#) a group of people who still assert the need for defending national interest in response to this neoliberal globalisation (Buzan and Lawson 2015). Paradoxically, the weakening of exclusive sovereignty of the nation-state as a large political entity gives rise to a separatist movement, especially within established nations such as the Scottish and Catalan independent movement in the UK and Spain (Fukuyama 2018). At the same time, diminishing economic autonomy of the nation in the face of transnational capital and international labour forces frustrates a significant number of ordinary people, and their anger creates the condition

in which right-wing nationalist populism flourishes (Collier 2018). In opposition to this surge of the conservative nationalist regime, some ethnic minority groups and cosmopolitan liberals also form a political alliance against such exclusive and essentialist nationalism (Castells 2015). In some cases, these liberals challenge the discourse of the official history by provoking post-colonialist sensitivity in order to demonstrate a more inclusive historical narrative that embraces cultural diversity within their nation (Malik 2020).

Such development leads to the situation that multiple discourses of the nation and nationalism can co-exist within the boundary of an established nation. Regarding a separatist movement, Seiler (1989, 191) notes earlier that ‘nations seek its legitimacy through hegemony ... or domination’, and further argues that there exist tensions between central nationalism which is a dominant form of national discourse and peripheral nationalism which is related to an increasing awareness of regionalism that may resist the top-down centre nationalism. Today, such a struggle between central and peripheral nationalism has become more manifest in the context of globalisation where the hegemony of the official nationalism is increasingly challenged by both regional and transnational consciousness. While Seiler’s concept of centre-peripheral nationalism mainly concerns geographical divisions within a nation, the hegemonic domination of national consciousness and its opposition can be extended to the tensions between left-wing and right-wing nationalism caused by the recent class and culture war in the West (Fukuyama 2018). Similarly, Anderson (1991) also distinguishes official and popular nationalism, former being nationalist ideology adopted by the ruling elites whether they are imperialists or an authoritarian regime, and the latter being vernacular national consciousness embraced by independent or democratic activists. Both Seiler (1989) and Anderson (1991) point out the dialectic nature of this power games between hegemonic and alternative nationalism, meaning that when popular or peripheral nationalism gains hegemony, this becomes a new official or central nationalist ideology which will subsequently be challenged

by another antithetical nationalist movement. What their views imply is that the hierarchy of national identity politics is by no mean fixed but there is a constant struggle between different nationalist groups for the hegemonic position.

Sport is often exploited by both central and peripheral nationalist groups to assert their legitimacy. The articulation between sport and militarism in the West, most notably in the US and UK exemplifies the exploitation of sport by the right-wing nationalist group. In this respect, Kelly (2017, 279) identifies four different ways that sport is being utilised in the context of militarism: “sport people paying respect to the military, injured military personnel becoming athletes, sports uniforms becoming militarised, [and] sponsors using sport to support the military”. Similarly, Butterworth (2012) observes the infiltration of war images and military individuals into the celebrational occasions in American professional sport. Such a sport and military connection tends to naturalise and neutralise the glorification of the armed forces and their duty abroad, and this cultural politics subsequently helps legitimate the way in which the conservative political groups construct their vision of national identity. At the same time, the use of sport by a counter-hegemonic nationalist group can also be seen. American anthem protest most notably by Colin Kaepernick and Megan Rapino can be considered as a ritual that imagines a different type of American identity (Schmidt, et al. 2019). While a conservative group regard their activism unpatriotic (Park, Park and Billings in press) their human rights movement can equally be patriotic conduct to build fairer and more morally just America (Boykoff and Carrington 2020).

Nationalist politics in Korea and Sport

The hegemonic struggle between the established and oppositional nationalist groups can also be found in Korea. It should be noted that the division of the Korean nation does not simply indicate the partition between North and South Korea. The nationalist politics within

South Korea is also polarised. Therefore, it may be useful to explain, albeit briefly, three distinctive forms of nationalism in South Korea before I examine the contest of different types of Korean nationalist politics at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang. These are postcolonial anti-imperialist nationalism, unified Korean ethnic nationalism, and South Korean state patriotic nationalism (Lee 2015). In addition to these three established national discourses, newly emerging cosmopolitan Korean identity will also be introduced in this section (Joo 2012).

First, the Korean Peninsula was occupied for 36 years (1910-1945) by Japan, and during this period of the occupation, Korean people had to endure repressive and exploitative colonial domination. The memory and legacy of colonialism embody one of the most noticeable features of Korean nationalism today, and sport is often exploited as a vehicle for displaying anti-Japanese sentiment in the postcolonial period (Tosa 2015). While this postcolonial nationalism widely spreads in the country, it is the liberal and left-wing political parties in Korea who mostly embrace and endorse this nationalist view in their policy (Choe 2019). As a result, when the liberal party is in power, this postcolonial sentiment is more easily observable in South Korea.

South Korean state patriotic nationalism is another important type of a nationalist sentiment in Korea. Anti-communism and the economic prosperity of the nation are some of the core components of this nationalist ideology, and the right-wing conservative parties adopt this view. This was the dominant form of nationalism from its liberation in 1945 to the early 2000s. As South Korea's anti-communist campaign and its economic development process during the Cold War required military support and financial assistance from the US and Japan, this state patriotic nationalism espouses a pro-American attitude and eschews an anti-Japanese feeling (Lee 2015). This was clearly official nationalism in Anderson's sense (1991) because the propagation of this nationalism had included the introduction of new patriotic rituals to Korean civic life since the foundation of the Korean Republic in 1948 (Shin 2006). In the same

vein, since the 1960s, the conservative regime had systematically fostered its national sporting team in order to win more medals at international contests because such a sporting achievement would motivate its citizens to take part in the government-led industrialisation project (Park and Seungyup 2015). Additionally, the conservative party is adept at displaying the nation's economic development to the international community by hosting major global sport mega-event (Bridge 2008).

Unified Korean ethnic nationalism highlights an ethnic homogeneity of the nation and sets the unification between the North and South Korea as the main aim of this nationalism (Shin 2006). In fact, the myth of ethnic homogeneity is the concept shared by different nationalist groups. However, it is this Korean ethnic nationalism that actively utilises this notion to justify the unification movement which this nationalism underpins. Since the partition of the nation and the subsequent Korean War in the 1950s, this nationalist group has campaigned for peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula and has intended to maintain the momentum of dialogue and collaboration with North Korea (Lee 2015). One interesting fact is that while the rightist groups in the West generally embrace this primordialism, in South Korea, it is left-wing parties whose manifesto reflects this ethnocentric nationalism. During the Cold War, this nationalist view was severely repressed by the ruling right-wing regime and has only begun to emerge as a mainstream nationalist thought since the 2000s when the centre-left liberalist party was in power for the first time in its history (Campbell 2015). The very first joint march between the two Koreas at the Opening Ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympics under the Korean Unification Flag, a symbol of the reunification movement, exemplifies the demonstration of this nationalism through sport (Merkel 2008).

Additionally, a new cosmopolitan identity has recently begun to appear in the domain of South Korean culture. The adoption of a neoliberalist globalisation policy and the subsequent increase of migrated populations challenge the myth of ethnic homogeneity of the

Korean nation, and this social change gives rise to multi-ethnic Korean national identity (Campbell 2015). It is too early to accept that this cosmopolitan culture as one of the major national characteristics, yet this new development surely deserves careful attention. Sport also mirrors this trend. After the 2002 FIFA World Cup when the South Korean football team advanced to the semi-finals, the manager of the team, Gus Hiddink, was awarded honorary citizenship of Korea, and he was praised as a national hero (Lee, Jackson and Lee 2007). Additionally, when a half-Korean and half-black American NFL player, Hines Ward, visited Korea in 2006, his Korean-ness widely celebrated by Korean media (Ahn 2014). Such cosmopolitanism may be temporal and transient emotion, merely reflecting a festive social climate forged by sporting achievements. However, this can equally be a sign of new multicultural Korean identity being emerged, albeit slowly.

The contest of nationalist politics at PyeongChang 2018

This section discusses a series of incidents that occurred during the Winter Olympics to demonstrate the power games amongst different nationalist groups in South Korea. It also shows an emerging cosmopolitan Korean identity being represented at this event

The surge of unified Korean ethnic nationalism

The worsening relations between the US and North Korea increased military tensions on the Korean peninsula and this became a major threat to PyeongChang until a few months before the Winter Olympics (Jin and Lough 2017). On New Year's Day 2018, however, North Korea suddenly declared that it would support the Winter Olympic Games to be held in the South, and it would also dispatch its delegation to the PyeongChang (Lee, 2021). Then, the two Koreas reopened their direct communication channel after nearly two years of hiatus to discuss

North Korea's participation in the upcoming Winter Olympics (Rowe 2019). This sudden shift created a political climate where unified Korean nationalism flourished during the Olympics.

The Opening Ceremony consisted of many symbols representing this unified Korean nationalism. The South Korean President Moon Jae-in sat next to Kim Yo-jong, the sister of the North Korean leader, at the grandstand in the Olympic stadium. Both Korean and international media paid attention to this amicable encounter between the two individuals (Rowe 2019). The Olympic Torch Relay was also arranged to signify the unity of the Korean nation. Two athletes from the unified Korean ice-hockey team were chosen to be joint torchbearers, each from North and South Korea respectively, for the last leg of the relay. The ignition of the Olympic Cauldron is the ritual that officially declares the opening of the sporting competition. Their collaboration at this ceremony symbolised this Olympics Games as a cooperative enterprise by the two Koreas, effectively reinforcing a unified Korean identity (Lee 2019). Moreover, under the Korean Unification Flag and under the banner reading "Korea", the athletes from the two Korean states marched as one at the parade of nations. This was also highly emblematic moment to display a unified Korean nationalism to the world.

The unified female ice hockey team also embodies this ethnic Korean nationalism at the Olympics. This sporting union was particularly significant because it was the first time in the history that the two sides took part in the Olympics as a single entity. On 25 January, two weeks before the Olympics, twelve North Korean players with their coaching staff travelled to the Olympic training centre in South Korea. On their arrival, the ice-hockey team held a brief welcoming ceremony. A banner reading "We are one" decorated the venue where this ritual took place. At this ceremony, the director of the training centre greeted the North Koreans, saying that 'although we only have a limited time to train together, let's make our best effort by being one heart and one mind (YTN 2018)'. A North Korean coach replied that 'I am very pleased to compete as a unified team at the Olympics. Let's put our heart and our strength

together in order to obtain a good result (YTN 2018)’. This ceremony, which was relayed by the media, was also an occasion that celebrated unified Korean nationalism at the Olympics and reinforced this nationalist sentiment in the country.

With regard to the political groups’ response to the North Korean team in PyeongChang, the centre-left and ruling Democratic Party of Korea (2018) claimed that ‘our party welcomes the North Korean team’s participation and the use of the name Korea [which describes unified Korea] and of the song *Ariang* [a traditional folk song which is popular on both sides] as an anthem of the unified Korean team.’ On the day when the two Koreas agreed to march jointly at the opening ceremony and to field a unified ice hockey team, the leftist Justice Party (2018) announced that ‘We wholeheartedly welcome this decision and wish that the Olympic Games will be staged without any accidents. We especially hope that this collaboration at the Olympics will lead to more regular exchanges between North and South Korea.’ The Korean Confederation of Trade Union (2018) also published a press release which wrote that ‘The PyeongChang Winter Olympics is a peace Olympics and furthermore it should be the Games leading to the reunification [of Korea]. ... It is really meaningful to welcome the North Korean guests, and to support our Olympic team waving the Korean Unification Flag together.’ These commentaries from liberal and left-wing political groups all endorsed the union of the two Koreas at the Olympics, thereby fanning the feeling of unified Korean nationalism. With the Democratic Party in power for nearly six months before the Olympics, the reunification movement was being emerged as an official (or central) nationalism in South Korea. It appears that the ruling party with other left-wing political organisations used this Olympics as a tool for circulating this ethnic Korean nationalism to the country.

The rise of South Korean state patriotic nationalism

The right-wing political parties and conservative groups dismissed the emerging reunification movement simply as a leftist ideology and repudiated North Korea's peaceful gesture at the Olympics as communist's propaganda (Chung 2018). In order to understand the reason for this opposition more accurately, it is necessary to review briefly the domestic political environment at that time. In December 2016, the National Assembly voted to impeach a conservative South Korean president Park Guen-Hye because of the corruption scandals involving her. In March 2017, the constitutional court of South Korea upheld the impeachment and Park was removed from office. In the following snap election in May, the left-leaning Moon Jae-in was elected as a new president. This was the moment patriotic state nationalism began to lose its hegemony in the political landscape of South Korea. Yet, a number of right-wing parties and civic organisations refused to accept the impeachment and subsequent dismissal of Park, and fiercely protested against the court decision (Park and Chung 2017). The Winter Olympic Games was held midst this domestic political climate.

As the relations between North and South Korea is rapidly improving before the event, the two sides agreed to hold a cultural event at a tourist district in Mount Kumgang in North Korea prior to the Winter Olympics. They also scheduled a North and South Korea joint training session at the Masikryong ski resort which is also located in the North Korean territory (Kim 2018). Conservative politicians and civic groups vehemently criticised these two events to be held in communist Korea, arguing that the music concert and joint training programme only served the interest of North Korea (Kim and Chung 2018). They claimed that it is clear evidence of the Winter Olympics being exploited by the communists to promote tourism in North Korea (Smith 2018). These responses from the right-wing groups clearly mirror their patriotic nationalist view which regards communist Korea as the main foe of the South Korean state (Lee 2015).

The rightist groups were also unhappy with the use of the Korean Unification Flag (KUF) and the folk song Arirang at the Olympics. It should be noted that the KUF is the flag often appeared in the left-wing student movement in South Korea against the authoritarian government in the 1980s (Knitter 2017). Therefore, the KUF to some extent signifies leftist political thoughts, of which unified ethnic Korean nationalism is an important part (Kim 2018). With the assertion that the KUF is alien to the South Korean state, conservative nationalists, including the three major opposition parties, voiced that the *Taegukgi* and the Patriotic Song, the national flag and anthem of South Korea, must be used at all times during the Olympics because it is essentially the sport mega-event to be staged in the South Korean town of PyeongChang (Kim 2018).

On the opening day of the Winter Olympics, state patriotic nationalists organised a large demonstration outside the Olympic Stadium where the Opening Ceremony was to be held. Here, the protesters expressed their anger by satirising this Olympic as Pyongyang [the North Korean capital] Games (Volodzko 2018). They also protested at the contamination of the Olympic Games by communist ideology. Interestingly, the demonstrators waved the US national flag alongside the *Taegukgi* (Baynes 2018). The display of these symbols reveals a unique aspect of conservative nationalism in South Korea. For this nationalist group, the nation's alliance with the US is considered an essential component of safeguarding the economy and security of South Korea (Lee 2015). This is an expression of nostalgic sentiment that the US military helped the South during the Korean War in the 1950s and provided economic aids to assist its industrial development after the civil war (Kang 2015). Subsequently, the patriotic state nationalism highlights the importance of the close tie between America and South Korea because this East Asian country is still technically at war with communist Korea.

These right-wing nationalists continued their anti-North Korean campaign until the end of the Olympics. Particularly, the Patriotic Party of Korea, a radical right-wing party led

by the ardent supporters of the impeached president Park Guen-Hye, actively involved in anti-communist and anti-unified ethnic nationalist campaigns (Park and Shin 2018). At the close of the Winter Olympics, the United Future Party (2018), the main opposition party, stated that ‘while this Olympic had a number of good memories, this event was seriously undermined by the North Korean intervention. President Moon Jae-in appears to be only interested in serving the guest from North Korea. We are fed up with such treacherous behaviour’. With left-leaning Moon as a new president, a unified ethnic nationalism was prevalent during the Olympics (Lee 2019). The protest and comments from the conservative parties clearly show their antipathy towards this circumstance, especially watching their hegemony in decline. In effect, flagging up South Korean state patriotic nationalism was their resistance to and culture war against the leftists.

The display of postcolonial nationalism

The demonstration of anti-Japanism is also observable during the Winter Olympics. The relations between South Korea and Japan often fluctuates. In 2018, the two sides were in a fierce dispute over the issue of the comfort women, the practice of sex slave by the Imperial Japanese Army during the Second World War. Many Asian women including Koreans were forced to be a sex worker to serve Japanese soldiers at the frontiers (Tanaka 2002). This matter has long been contentious, and this prevents the two nations from developing constructive partnerships (Tisdall 2015). In 2015, South Korea, which was led by a conservative president Park Guen Hye, settled a compensation deal with Japan which claimed to resolve this matter finally and irreversibly (Tisdall 2015). However, this pact deeply frustrated many South Korean citizens including the former comfort women because the compensation was insufficient, and the victims had also been seeking a formal apology from the Japanese government for their wrongdoing during the war (Kim 2015). In 2017 when the president Moon

Jae-in was in power, his centre-left government requested the amendment of the 2015 deal (Jung 2017). Shinzo Abe's administration in Japan refused to accept this demand, claiming that the revision of the pact violates the diplomatic agreement between two sides. The dialogue then halted. Subsequently, Japan and Korea relations have been soured since the altercation.

On 8 February 2018, a day before the commencement of the Winter Olympics, a group of civic organisations in South Korea held a political rally in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. The protestors displayed banners reading "We won't welcome Shinzo Abe" and "We are seeking apologies" (Nam 2018). They also pelted a large photograph of the Japanese Prime Minister with bags of ashes. This was not the first time that anti-Japan demonstrating took place prior to the Olympics. A few weeks earlier, a group of university students also organised a similar campaign against Mr Abe near the Japanese Embassy. Reflecting this diplomatic tension, Mr Abe was considering forgoing his attendance at the Opening Ceremony of the Winter Olympics (Kyoto 2017). However, two weeks before the Olympics, he confirmed that he would attend the Olympic ceremony. He further noted that he would seek a confirmation with Mr Moon the importance of the military alliance between Japan, the US and South Korea amidst increasing North Korea's provocation in Northeast Asia (Osaki 2018). This message appeared to be disturbing the mood of inter-Korean reconciliation at the Olympics that has just been warmed up. This fanned the flame of postcolonial nationalism in Korea. A series of the protests taken place in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul reflected this nationalistic emotion.

Another incident that triggered this postcolonial nationalism at the Winter Olympic was the design of the Korean Unification Flag (KUF) to be used at the Olympics. In the East Sea/ Sea of Japan, there are small islets, Dokdo, controlled and administrated by South Korea. This was a symbol of Korea's liberation because the nation reclaimed these islets from Japan when the imperial occupation ended (Mayali and Yoo 2018). Yet, Japan also claims that the

islets are their territory called Takeshima. The original design of the KUF at PyeongChang contains a small dot representing Dokdo. Yet, Japan raised this issue to the IOC. Japan also voiced concern over the map, which include the islets, to be found on the official webpage of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics (Siripala 2018). The IOC asked Korean to remove the dot from the flag in order to avoid politicisation of the Olympic Games, and the two Koreas heeded the IOC's recommendation as the host nation had no intention to provoke any further dispute with Japan (Yonhap 2018). Despite this tolerant response, Japan opened the Takeshima exhibition in Tokyo to claim its sovereignty over the islets. The South Korean government requested immediate closure of this display, but Japan rejected this demand (AFP 2018). This territorial row caused the rise of postcolonial nationalism in Korea during the Olympics. A group of protesters held a media conference before the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to condemn the Japanese claim on Dokdo. They also appealed to the Korean Sport Council to restore these islets on the unification flag. This quarrel over Dokdo and the design of the KUF at the Winter Olympics are clearly the legacies of Japanese colonialism over the Korean Peninsula.

The emergence of cosmopolitan identity

During the winter sport mega-event, cosmopolitan national identity can also be detected. Conventionally, the myth of ethnic homogeneity one of the essential elements of Korean nationalism (Shin 2006). The Opening and Closing Ceremonies of this Winter Olympics indeed contain a range of symbols that represent this organic nationalism (Lee 2019). Yet, South Korea is the country that actively embraces neoliberal globalisation, and the influx of foreign nationals from diverse cultural backgrounds have rapidly been transforming the composition of its population (Paik 2010). In this respect, the 2018 Winter Olympic was an occasion where an image of multi-ethnic Korean identity was gradually conjuring up. Again, with regard to the Opening Ceremony, the Rainbow Children Choir, whose members consisted

of children from multicultural families settled in South Korea, sang the national anthem of the host country before the South Korean president formally declared the opening of the Olympic Games. Arguably, the performance of the national anthem was the most solemn moment in the ceremony which displays an official identity of the host nation (Lee and Maguire 2009). Clearly, the appearance of the multi-ethnic choir at this nationalistic ritual signifies cosmopolitanism that has slowly but surely been becoming one of the major characteristics of Korean identity.

Team South Korea at this Olympics, which consisted of 19 naturalised players, also implied multicultural Korea (Longman and Lee 2018). The Korean ice hockey teams, both male and female squads, present an interesting example in this respect. The unified Korean women's team not only consisted of players from North and South Korea. It also included four naturalised skaters from the US and Canada. Also, an American head coach, Sarah Murray, led the team at the Olympics. In that sense, the collaboration between North Korean, South Korean and naturalised Korean players graphically created an image of cosmopolitan Korea. As this women's ice hockey team received huge media attention mainly because of the inter-Korean connection, their multi-ethnic composition was also naturally publicised. Subsequently, the story of the four naturalised players also appears in the media (Park 2018). This media appearance in effect helped disseminate the notion of multiculturalism, defying the myth of ethnic homogeneity. The male hockey team attracted comparatively less attention from the media, but this team also consisted of seven foreign-born players (Harlan 2018). In fact, the men's hockey team was the first multi-ethnic Korean national team in the history of Korean sport. This trend symbolically shows cosmopolitanism being emerged gradually as one of the Korean identities.

The case of Chloe Kim offers another interesting episode. She is a Korean American snowboarder, and the athlete won Olympic gold in the women's halfpipe event in PyeongChang as a member of Team USA. When Chloe Kim became an Olympic champion,

South Korean media highlighted her ethnic root and celebrated her victory as if she was one of fellow Koreans despite her being an American citizen (Jeon 2018, Park 2018). Notably, in her interview with NBC, an American broadcaster, the Olympic champion emphatically commented that she was proud to be a Korean American (Belvedere 2018). South Korean newspapers relayed an extract from this interview (Park 2018). Her comments may indicate transnational identity that can often be found in the diaspora community where both one's official nationality and their ethnic origin affect national identity politics of immigrants and their offspring (Darby 2010, Joo 2012). At the same time, the portrayal of this Korean American Olympian by Korean media may also be an indication that Korean society has begun to embrace a multitude of Korean-ness, challenging its conventional essentialist nationalism (Campbell 2015). It may be an exaggeration to argue that cosmopolitanism is now one of the core elements of Korean identity. Nevertheless, it seems certain that the migration of people from and to this East Asian nation has now been constructing a more flexible sense of Korean nationalism as the cases of naturalised Korean and Korean American athletes at the Winter Olympics show.

Discussion

Geller (1983, 1) notes that 'nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. ... Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of this principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment.' In Korea, the memories of colonialism, of the civil war and of the partition significantly influence the formation of the modern Korean nationalism (Jager 2003). To some extent, Korea is the nation that Geller's political principle has not yet been realised because the nation is divided into two parts after the liberation against their will, and there is still a territorial

dispute between Korea and Japan. Therefore, for Koreans, the memory of the unfortunate past is an ongoing lived experience that still affects their national consciousness.

At the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, I observed a number of different nationalist sentiments being aroused. Moreover, the demonstration of different types of nationalism also polarised South Korean society. This situation compels me to reconsider the nature of nationalism and the role that sport plays in evoking nationalistic emotion. Generally, nationalism including patriotism works as a unifying force as the nation provides the most powerful sense of collective identity (Smith 2001, Özkirimli 2000). Likewise, a few influential texts on Korean nationalism mainly perceive this political ideology or movement as a source of social integration (Jager 2003, Shin 2006). Yet, the current study shows that nationalism functions as both a force for unity and a source of division in contemporary South Korea. More interestingly, nationalist politics are divided according to the spectrum of political ideologies in this country. For instance, conservative politics underpins South Korean patriotic nationalism whereas progressive parties support a unified Korean ethnic nationalism. While both sides tend to share the sentiment of postcolonial anti-Japanese nationalism, it is the progressive politics that embraces and expresses this nationalism more actively. The right-wing politics tends to adopt a more pragmatic approach when it comes to the relations between Korea and Japan. Each nationalist sentiment and the way this feeling is represented work as a unifying force only within the same political community (i.e. a group of leftists or rightists). Nationalism turns into a source of disunity as the power games between different political communities in Korea intensify. Given Geller's principle is yet to be materialised in this nation, each political party and their supporters appear to envision a different image of the Korean nation.

In this respect, Seiler's notion of peripheral and central nationalism (Seiler 1989), and Anderson's official and popular nationalism (Anderson 1991) can be particularly noteworthy. They both admit a dialectic nature of nationalism which means that nationalist politics is by no

means static but is dynamic. However, their main concerns are the existence of different national communities in a single territory, and the issue of their subjugation and subordination. The situation in Korea is less of the tensions between different national communities but more of between different political/ ideological communities. Thus, in conceptualising such characteristics of nationalist politics, instead of Seiler and Anderson's notion of the division between the major and minor ethnic groups and their conflict within the boundary of the nation, the hegemonic relations between a different type of nationalist politics in a single national community would better describe the nature of Korean national identity politics today. This means that the power balance between different nationalist groups is constantly shifting, and these groups assert their legitimacy through culture war. The key aim of this hegemonic struggle is not to establish a new nation or reinstate a lost nation but to change the characteristics of the existing nation.

There was an expectation that the 2018 Winter Olympics to be a patriotic game which would involve a range of national rituals to strengthen Korean nationalism domestically and to display its cultural identity to the world (Joo, Bae and Kassens-Noor 2017, Merkel and Kim 2011). This appears to be partly correct. In fact, my observation reveals the Olympics an important site of this hegemonic struggle between different nationalist groups in this single nation-state. As political hegemony is gradually shifting towards left-leaning ethnic nationalists, the Winter Olympics turned into a cultural space where a unified Korean nationalism was being displayed and celebrated. This national discourse attached to the Winter Olympics actively permeates into the Korean public sphere, and subsequently makes the reunification of the Korean Peninsula a major agenda for the contemporary nationalist politics. Postcolonial anti-Japanese nationalism was also reminded through this Olympics, and this makes Korean citizens believe that Japan still poses a threat to the welfare of their home nation. Outside the Olympic stadium, right-wing patriotic nationalist groups displayed their anti-North

Korean feelings in order to protect their political interest and to defend their declining hegemony. Additionally, cosmopolitan Korean identity was also demonstrated, and this emerging multiculturalism defies the myth of ethnically homogeneous Korea. Then, far from being a unifying force, the Winter Olympics offered a theatre where different nationalist groups show multiple images of the nation they envision.

Conclusion

This article examined a different type of Korean nationalism being displayed through the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in PyeongChang. Bairner (2001) states that sport is a cultural practice that triggers the most emotive sense of nationalism in peacetime. Topič and Coakley (2010) further note that the way in which sport represents national identity is complicated and diverse. Starting from these basic notions, this study attempted to conceptualise the complexity of nationalism being expressed through sport as a means of integration and as a cause of polarisation. In terms of the theoretical underpinning of this study, I try to modify Seiler's (1989) and Anderson's (1991) duality of nationalism in the context of South Korean nationalist politics.

At PyeongChang 2018, 1) unified Korean ethnic nationalism, 2) South Korean state patriot nationalism, 3) postcolonial anti-imperialist nationalism and 4) cosmopolitan Korean identity are the four major forms of nationalist sentiment being aroused and represented through sport. Recently, the four variants of nationalism have been vying for a dominant position in the hierarchy of South Korean politics (Cho 2020, Lee 2015) and in the midst of intensifying national identity wars, the Winter Olympics presented a unique platform on which each nationalist group asserts the legitimacy of their sense of nationhood. Therefore, this investigation concludes that the 2018 Winter Olympic Games was not simply a sporting contest

between athletes but more importantly was a field of the hegemonic struggle between adherents of different nationalistic views

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