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Anti-Korean Sentiment and Hate Speech in the Current Japan: A Report from the Street

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Abstract

This paper captures the trend of escalating anti Korean sentiment and hates speech in the current Japan and identifies on-going history of fight against those who try to destroy society by base-hearted means in Japan. This paper also examines claims of the racist group by interrupting their remarks. The proposition of the paper is this: it is ontological insecurity and sense of deprivation widely shared within society that has caused current emergence of the exclusive sentiment and movement.

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1. A Brief History of Zaitoku-kai and Its Claims

1.1. Angry Protesters against Zaitoku-kai

“Korean Cockroaches, go home!” “Comfort women are prostitutes and liars,” “Koreans and Chinese stop stealing our oxygen!” “If you hate Japan, Why don’t you go home?” or “You can throw stones at Korean. You can rape Korean ladies.” Those are a short list of remarks that Japanese racists shouted during demonstrations and street propaganda. There are several similar organizations, “Zaitoku-kai” being the most recognized one that has led
demonstrations filled with such bellicose rhetoric. Since summer 2012, when territorial disputes gained public attention, ultra-nationalistic demonstrations have repeatedly taken place and still now organized. Their hearted are not only directed to racial minorities but to any people they can enjoy attacking and slandering. Due to the lack of regulation, those demonstrations are legal and their “right” to threaten members of the society is “protected” under “freedom of speech.” Not all Japanese, however, remain shy in this crisis of democracy. In February 2013, “decent” part of Japanese society started to organize themselves and strike back against anti-foreigner groups. Supported by this “counter” movement, regulation over hate speech was discussed in the congress.

“Go home racist!” “You are Shame of Japan!” “Stop that stupid hates speech!” As many as 50 angry protesters shout to group of racists. Protected by local police, surged racists awkwardly continued their favorite non-sense about “privileges of Korean residents” and they tried to inform passersby about “how Japanese has been suppressed by Koreans” or “how urgent it is for Japanese to see the truth and wake up.” Around them, as many as 30 policemen are watching both sides in order to avoid violence between protesters and racists.

This is what you could see in the largest shopping district in Kyoto, this early summer. One might not be able to notice the presence of racists due to the walls of police and “bad audience” who shout back to any racist remarks. What indicate their presence are Japanese national flags and military flags and hate speech such as: “We are not racist. We are just saying “Trash to trash box, Korean to Korean Peninsula!” …“Korean-residence (or zainichi) should serve your country. Korean men should be drafted to Korean Army and women should become prostitute like comfort women!” [1]

Those who confront against racists are called “counter”. Ideologically, the counter cannot be categorized into single entity such as right or left. Ethnicities and age of counter also vary. The size of counter group differs on occasion. For example, in Shinjuku, Tokyo, nearly 3000 people came to protest against racist demonstration whose number was about five hundred or less. In Osaka, participants of such demonstration have been slightly decreasing from nearly 70 in the beginning of year 2003 to less than 50 in July, and counter increased from less than 20 in February up to 80 in July.

While introducing current anti-Korean sentiment and hate speech or “sympathy” to those extreme harassments to minority group, this report intends to examine some typical characteristics of Zaitoku-kai and its sympathizers’ argument in order to know the following: what their claims are what they are angry about.

1.2. Pre-History of Zaitoku-kai and Their Sympathizers.

Zaitoku-kai or “Association of Citizens who do not Tolerate Privileges of Foreign Residents in Japan” was founded by the end of 2006. By targeting relatively unprotected section of society, Zaitoku-kai attracted certain number of population. The membership is announced to be approximately 13500. Zaitoku-kai and similar organizations refer to themselves as “active conservatives” or “conservatives who act”, while those who have seen their activities call them racists, racist in the street, or “neto-uyo”. The so-called “neto-uyo” stands for “net uyoku”, literally meaning “right wing in the internet”. The term refers to politically active people with nationalistic rhetoric, who often respond to any phenomena they find related to Korean peninsula or China. New York Times once introduced neto-uyo as economically deprived Japanese youth who release their frustration by attacking certain population and who intend to demonstrate their anger to the society from which they are excluded. [2] While it is clear that those online based xenophobia or exclusive mentality has given power to openly active groups such as Zaitoku-kai, the size and influence of this anonymous population is difficult to examine. Those who appear onto the street are rather exceptional and most of those who sympathize with extreme xenophobia remain latent. The announced number of the Zaitoku-kai is officially a little more than 13000 nationwide, and the number of participants to the demonstration has been 1500 to 2000 at most. One suggestive number was delivered from recent national election. In the election for the upper house in July 2013, a candidate Suzuki Yoshiyuki gained 77465 votes in Tokyo metropolitan constituent. As a leader of extreme-right-wing party Suzuki has been known for his extreme opposition to immigration policy and manifested hatred to Korea (its government policy, people, and residents in Japan). He was far from gaining a seat and none of his party member did, but the number has proved that there is not a small mass of people sympathized to xenophobia and exclusionist policies.
The origin of racism centered on Zaitoku-kai can be dated back more than a decade. Provoked by a missile emission by Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in 1998, xenophobic rhetoric in the bulletin board can be observed since the end of 90s, when Japan was experiencing nearly a decade of economic recession. FIFA World Cup co-hosted by Japan and Korea in 2002 provoked anti-Korean sentiment among some Japanese. In the history of anti-Korean sentiment among right-wing internet user or neto-uyo, the world cup was pivotal. Yoneda Takashi, head of PR division of Zaitoku-kai, explains how “a good deal of unfair judgments,” “rough plays by Korean players,” and “filthy booing against Japanese national team” were furious and even “pro-Korean people” changed their attitude against Korea, [3] answering to a Journalist, Yasuda Koichi, a prominent journalist who recently published reportage on Zaitoku-kai.

The same year, DPRK acknowledged systematic engagement in the abduction, making antagonism against Koreans in general even much deeper. The abduction offered “victim” status to Japan for the first time in relation to neighboring nation-states in modern-contemporary history. General anti-Korean was materialized by publication of Yamano Sharin’s notorious best-seller “Ken-Kanryu” in 2005, a book filled with unexamined prejudice about Korean residents and malicious description of orthodox understanding of modern Japanese history, arguably termed “masochistic view of history.” The book provided neto-uyo and racists with concrete foundation to justify discrimination and violence against Korean-residents.

### 1.3. Arguments of Zaitoku-kai

The purpose of the section is to provide concise information about Zaitoku-kai’s claim. Although the list could be extended, their main theme could be summarized into a few points. Listed below are examples of arguments Zaitoku-kai and its sympathizers repeat during the demonstration or street propaganda. Some of the claims are no longer used due to the fact that they were repeatedly refuted by liberal protesters.

1. Koreans not have to pay tax, subscription fee of NHK (Japanese National Broadcasting), water and so on.”
2. Koreans can receive 6 million yen a year by social aid therefore they do not have to work.”
3. Koreans can use their alias to create bank accounts, therefore easy to conduct illegal transaction.”
4. Koreans are privileged because when they commit crime only their Japanese names are reported and their real names (Korean name) are not reported.”
5. Koreans have special permanent resident status that other nationalities do not have.
6. Crime rate by Korean residents is much higher.

As for point 1 and 2, such facts do not exist. However, Zaitoku-kai and its allies tend to believe that Korean has received “merits” from social security services from which Japanese they claim to be excluded.

As for 3, it is common that Korean residents have double name, Korean and Japanese, and it is true that illegal transaction of money or money laundering was conducted using the threshold of the praxis, the likelihood to be engaged in criminal activity would not be called “privilege” unless one desires to commit the crime. Point 4 is one of the most repeated themes but like the rest of claims it is pointless. Many Korean residents or zainichi in Japan use socially recognized Japanese name; possible impact of either name disclosed simply depending on circumstances. And again, this point is unrelated to the majority of Korean population who are not engaged in criminal activities.

As for point 5, it is not a “privilege” that Korean residents have over Japanese. Although Korean residents have semi-full status due to the historical fact that Koreans were given full citizenship during annexation period, Koreans do not have universal suffrage; therefore, point 5 of Zaitoku-kai is invalid, leaving history out of consideration. As for point 6, contrary to their argument, the crime rate of Japanese national and Korean-residents in urban areas are almost the same.

The list could be extended, but it is not the purpose of this paper to refute every single argument. The important thing is that Zaitoku-kai and its allies utilize any “knowledge” and “facts” to justify their harassment and slandering. In short, one of the Zaitoku-kai’s theses is that “Koreans are making use of Japanese” or “Koreans have been stealing our property in debased way.”
1.4. “Masochistic History”: Other Typical Claims

Historical revisionism is another source of their arguments. The central theme is that Japan fought for good cause; therefore (1) there is no need for apology, (2) Japanese should be more proud of their history and grandfather’s generation, (3) and China and Korea are morally inferior countries that cannot stop criticizing Japan’s past, (4) unfortunately though, regular Japanese are not aware of those “facts” and intoxicated by prevailing view on history that are “masochistic”. For example, when citizen organization in Osaka invited Korean elders who used work for Japanese Army as “comfort women”, members of Zaitoku-kai and its active sympathizers had showed up to the vicinities of those gatherings for interference (May 25, 2013). In the street across from the conference room where ex-comfort women share their stories to the audience, those racists conducted public demonstration claiming that there was no such “historical fact” that Korean ladies were forced to become “comfort women” by Japanese Army. They added “so called comfort women are filthy liars. They became prostitute for the money.... Today, they came to Japan for compensation, again for money. They came to Japan more than half a century later for money because they are too old for prostitution.” Similarly, during another demonstration taken place in Tsuruhashi district, young-male participant at the age of 19 exclaimed passionately that “to acknowledge such a lie as ‘comfort women’ is insult to our glorious war dead.” It is interesting how “historical facts” plays role in their perception. Historical topics often served as a catalyst to express their hatred against racial minorities. For example, in a demonstration that insists “breakup” of relation between Korean and Japan (Osaka, May 26, 2013), a female voice enhanced by microphone alerted:

“Koreans are criminals and beggars. They do not obey any law. Kick them out! No one believes such thing as comfort women! Kick them out together with 500000 Korean prostitutes! Korea itself is racist country. We won’t forgive Korea that welcomes Japan’s misfortune. Koreas should learn their correct history!” [4]

Revised history or a history that they want to be true are frequently employed and used in a purpose of insulting minority group. For Zaitoku-kai and its allies, anything related to Korean-residence (zainichi), or China (customary pronounced “sina” in order to imply disdain) and Korea (pronounced “chosen”) can stir up their disdain. Japanese are no exception. Anyone who disagrees with their opinion is considered to be “anti-Japan” or involved in “leftist-extremist” organization. Considering their “obsession” to neighboring countries, it is no mystery that they are also frustrated by ordinary facts that Korean pop-culture and tourism to Korea and China has become normal matters. One speaker angrily stated in the same demonstration in Osaka, “Japanese who enjoy going to Korea are plain fool. Such Japanese do not deserve to live. Stop being Japanese!”

Quoted above are only a part of their recent remarks. According to their website, Zaitoku-kai has 13646 members. When the organization of founded in the end of 2006, the member was only 30. Reaching 1000 in March 2007, the organization reached 10000 in April of 2011. In the history of Zaitoku-kai and “active conservatives” the year 2009 is significant.

2. The Zaitoku-kai’s Activities

In this section of this paper, several demonstrations or incidents are going to be introduced. The first one is the one called “Calderon Demo”, a protest against Filipino family, the Calderons, living in Warabi, Saitama. Father of Calderon Noriko had worked in Japan for 16 years but due to the reform on immigration law in 2004, he lost legal status to continue living in Japan. For few years, a special permission had been given to the family by Japanese government. However, in April 2009, it was decided that while Calderon Noriko who became student of local public junior high school could remain in Japan her parents were to be deported back to the Philippines. The decision by Japanese immigration office that forced 13-year-old school girl to choose parents or country itself needs to be accused. What Zaitoku-kai had done is simply outrageous and needs to be remembered. [5]
2.1. “Calderon Incident” April 11, 2009

On April 11, a group of 130 men and women equipped with national flags and microphones came to the small suburban city of Warabi, walked through main streets, shouting lines such as “illegal immigrant should go home”, “Arrest criminals!” “Respect Japanese government’s decision!” In the speech, Sakurai Makoto read “We are requesting immediate deportation of illegal immigrants.” The fact was that the family had already agreed to follow the judgment of the Japanese government. The “nationalists” group even conducted speech in front of the apartment they spotted as a home of the targeted family.

Apart from Calderon family, their speech extended toward “left activists” who were claimed to earn profit from supporting the family, local public office that had supported the family, and mainstream media that didn’t report how dangerous it was to let illegal immigrants stay in Japan. Whatever they say, it is obvious that their intention was to attract people’s attention by broadcasting their demonstration. In fact, due to the “success” of Calderon incident, Zaitoku-kai’s membership increased; the year that followed the event, average 280 new members joined the internet-based anti-foreigners group every month. On-line member reached 10000 shortly after the Calderon incident.

2.2. Harassment to Korean School in Kyoto, December 2009

The second incident, which took place in Kyoto 7 months later of Warabi’s, needs to be introduced. On December 4, 2009, eleven members of Zaitoku-kai and its allies appeared in front of a Korean elementary school, where education to preserve ethnic identity of Koreans has been offered. With limited space and fund, the school had been using a public park next to gate as school ground for years and Kyoto city authority had given silent approval. Zaitoku-kai, however, took their chance to claims that school had been occupying citizen’s property illegally that any equipment that school leaves in the part needs to be removed. Their claim was no more than false accusation but as far as people behind PC monitors are happy, the mission is “success”. Around 1 pm, toward the school where 150 of students were taking class, a series of hate speech was casted through microphone.

“This school is training center of North Korean spies.”

“Korean School should disappear!”; “Children? Give me a break. They are children of criminals”

“Chosen-jin (synonym for the Korean, often used to show disdain), you all stink.”

“They raped Japanese women in the turmoil after the war and occupied this land.”

The demonstration, later described “objectively stupid and insulting” by a lawyer who defended the accused, lasted for one hour. Four participants of the “patriotic” action were charged of forcible obstruction and contempt to be judged guilty. Free-lance journalist Nakamura Iruson reports a distress of a mother, who was repeatedly asked by her 10-year-old daughter, “Is it wrong to be Korean?” “Why those people are so angry?” “Where do they mean that we should go back? “Will they come again?”[6] The school and parents have made compensation claim and the court decision will be announced in September, 2013.

2.3. Street Propaganda in Korean Town in Tsuruhashi, Osaka.

Since August of 2012, when territorial dispute between Korea and Japan stimulated a part of right-wingers in each society, Zaitoku-kai has become active again. Among the demonstrations and street propaganda conducted almost every weekend, the demonstration and speech in Tsuruhashi Osaka on February 24 was sensational. The group walked through the largest Korean community in Japan, with forest of Japanese military flag, shouting hate speech such as “Korean Cockroaches should be kicked out of Japan,” “Korean residence are descendants of criminals” and “Kill, Kill Koreans.” When the demonstration was finished, they began public “hate” speech that lasted for several hours. A participant, 14-year-old Japanese girl claimed,

“I cannot tell you how much I despise you and I want to kill you all. You have smug face and if you continue to behave in that way we will have massacre here in Tsuruhashi. This is Japan, and you should go back to Korea. You do not belong here.” [7]
Her remark was praised by participants around her and internet audience. At the same time, this Tsuruhashi incident of February 24 alerted decent sector of civil society. On the same day, similar demonstration focusing on disputed Liancourt Rocks took place in Nagoya, Sendai and Fukuoka. First on SNS followed by major newspapers, the “Tsuruhashi-massacre” remark gained social attention, causing citizens to become aware of severity of the issue.


Obsession to hatred is what connects participants, but that obsession could be articulated into elements. In this section of the paper, Zaitoku-kai’ activities and remarks are examined in order to observe mentalities of racists and sympathizers.

3.1 Characteristics and Mentalities of Zaitoku kai or neto-uyo

Desire for disorder, anti-left sentiment, antipathy to politically-correctness, idea that they are chosen, tendency to equate or confuse individual and state, and victim mentality are typical component that sustains their endless activities of hatred. Each element is interchangeably related, and they are combined in different porting depending on topic or individual characters. It is important to capture those mentalities because it represents difficulties that our society confronts. Zaitoku-kai, neto-uyo and racist in the street are symptom of the society where sense of stagnation and being deprived of chances is abounded.

Desire for disorder

Although they prefer to call themselves “conservative”, their action seems to be centered on destruction. Desire for disorder is obvious in their remarks. Sakurai Makoto, the leader of Zaitoku-kai defined his activity as a movement that forerun “killing period” following false and despicable peace. Another leading figure shouted during a street propaganda “We cannot negotiate with Koreans. What should we do? There is only one option left: War! We Want War!” Apart from those rhetorical references to war, desire for social disorder was observed in their activities. For example, 18-year-old boy who led a subgroup of Zaitoku-kai urged his followers to “charge” against protesters. “Korean Cockroaches, Go Home” “You are dirty spicy and you stink. Leave Japan!” “Die off as soon as you can” “Can you take this? Aren’t you no angry? If you have some guts left, why don’t you bravely stand against us?” Such bombardment of assaultive remarks well indicates their desire for disorder and violence.

Their desire for disorder which is also indicated by that Nazi symbols were frequently used. Nazi flags were witnessed during the demonstration. Interestingly, however, at the very same scene, they put Nazi symbols in the center of Korean national flag in order to insult Korea.

“Performing” Racism

Such call for violence can be analyzed as “performance” intended to appeal to viewers behind PC monitors. Those racists on the street are in a way “performer” expecting to earn more views and access to their internet broadcasting. They knew well that majority of people would frown upon their racist “performance” but the very notion that majority would frown itself seems to motivate their activities. They are challenging “taboos” of liberal society, knowing that a portion of those who feel being oppressed and those who feel insecured in the society would enjoy their anti-social behaviors. Under decades’ of economic depression and neoliberal reform, people tend to feel that they are “vulnerable” in society, and that government would not care about individuals. More and more people would think that they are “abandoned” from society. Current anti-Korean sentiment coincides with such socio-economic context where “human rights” sounds somewhat “empty”.

“Anti-Left”Sentiment

Since neto-uyo and Zaitoku-kai identify themselves “right” or “conservative”, to deny the opposing side “left” is significant themes for them. Central argument is that so called “left” as a dominant ideology has implanted “masochistic view of history” into Japanese public. As mentioned earlier in section 1-4, the “masochistic” view includes such prevailing view that describes Japan’s military aggression during Asia-Pacific War as “aggression” or
“invasion”. As logic goes, it is also considered to be “masochistic” to doubt their revisionist view such that the purpose of the war was to liberate Asia from Western colonialism, which is also considered “masochistic”. According to their argument, Japanese has been brainwashed by “communist” history teachers who fanatically believe “Japan has always been bad.” Neto-uyo and racist tenet also teaches us that mainstream media is “anti-Japan” and dominated by “leftist” or Korean residents.

Antipathy to “Politically- Correctness”

It should be noted that they put, as if it were witty, “cosmetic words” among things participants should not bring into a demonstration. “Cosmetic words” seem to mean clichés such that “Japan and Korea should build peaceful future together” or “Let’s stop hating each other”. The fact that they expressly states “No Cosmetic Words” suggests that they perceive they are talking “truth” or “fact”. Indeed, one of the typical responses of racists being criticized of their hate speech is that they are only presenting “truth” or “fact”, that are often based on uncertain or distorted information found in the internet. It maybe that they are experiencing upsurge of sentiment by saying publicly things they were not supposed to say.

Idea that “we are chosen minority”

They tend to see themselves as “awakened few” who exceptionally grasp “the truth” unnoticed by the majority. They are “real” Japanese who truthfully and sincerely care about Japan. The idea of them being chosen people is often repeated in their street propaganda. For example, one participant argued that:

“Koreans have privileges that we don’t have. It is commonsense and written everywhere in the internet. We didn’t know about such injustice until I read useful blogs in the internet. After knowing the truth, we cannot remain quite. Please wake up! We are fooled by mainstream media.”

“Korean privileges” being the most prominent, there are endless lists of “secrets” that they claim to be hidden from Japanese. For example, a leading figure in the ultra-nationalist group spoke of “abduction by North Korea” as an “historical fact hidden by mainstream media and government”. History is another preferred topic. Combined with the distrust to mainstream media and preference to “patriotic” or “anti-Korean” internet based information, mentality that they acquire “hidden knowledge” hidden from normal Japanese is one of the essential features of their mentality.

Tendency to conceptually equate the “individual” and the “state”

“Kill Korea.” This is what was written in one of the placard carried by a participant of street propaganda in Osaka. What interests us is that the objective is not “Koreans”, a term indicating a group of people but Korea, a term indicating the country or the state.

Also, racists or neto-uyos on the street tend to think that those who oppose them are “Koreans”. In their perception, each individual is predestined to be most zealous “believer” of country he/she belongs to; therefore, they tend to think that any hindrance they face is from non-Japanese. It is common that surrounded racists call “counters”, protesters against racism in the street, “Koreans” despite that most member of the counters are ethnic Japanese.

The most typical tendency of neto-uyo or racist groups in the street is that they see themselves as alter-ego of “state” of Japan. They are “Japan”, the state. This conceptual confusion explains their excessive interest on territory and history. Territorial dispute is not understood in the context of politics between states, but rather as bleaching of one’s body. To acknowledge Japan’s militaristic and imperial past and devastation it caused to citizens of neighbouring countries and Japan itself is to denounce his dignity. Furthermore, any negative mention on Japan is rejected as “anti-Japan” meaning, brainwashed by “leftist conspiracy by school and media.

Victim mentality

Yasuda Koichi, referring to members of the group, states that it is “victim mentality” that proved foundation to racists’ belief. [8] Answering to interview, Yasuda sees “active conservatism” has aroused out of sense of crisis or insecurity. Urgent motivation to take back what their deprived rights and dignity took shape of visceral racism. Yasuda disagrees with widespread notion that participants of such activities are jobless youth; instead he stresses on diversity of participants. Casually dressed young male of 20s to 30s being dominant, businessman-like or
housewife-like-looking participants and elders are observed in the demonstration. It is not correct to conclude the current ultra-nationalism arose from joblessness. At best, unstable employment and sense of insecurity about the future may explain the rise of such movement. Yasuda stresses it is hatred that connects isolated individual who feels unrepresented and excluded from mainstream society. The internet provided them with platform to release the frustration, by attacking relatively unprotected population such as ethnic minorities and recipients of social aid. By attacking “the weak”, one can restore “dignity”, Yasuda continues. They often justify their activities and hate speech by saying “because I love Japan”, but “because i want to be loved by Japan” would be more accurate expression. Yasuda close the interview by saying, “those people might be striving sense of being protected in a society where instability became paradigm. They critically lack awareness that they are hurting people and they are racists. [9]

3.2. Analysis on Characteristics and Mentalities of Zaitoku-kai or Neto-uyo

Hana Arendt in The Origin of Totalitarianism talked about mob. Primarily the mob is a group in which “the residue of all classes is represented.” [10] The time of the Dreyfus affair, a prelude to fascism era, witnessed emergence of “mobs” and alliance of mob and elite who had choked up liberal democracy. For those who disdain superficiality of “bourgeois” life, the mob was “living expression of virile and primitive strength.” For those internalized “philosophy of pessimism”, the mob is the embodiment of the people who symbolize collapse of civil society filled with hypocrisy and injustice. [11]

The mob in Arendt’s time is Zaitoku-kai in present Japan, as written by Arita Yosifu, a congressman in the upper house. Arendt defined the mob as a collection of people who became unrepresented by social classes. Arendt argued that with the feeling of unrepresented and left unprotected by institutions, large mass of declining middle class had invited and welcome the age of fascism. Referring to the argument left by Arendt, Arita raised an alarm over current situation. Zaitoku-kai and its sympathizer are those who feel unrepresented by society and nation-state.

Sociological theories about ontological insecurity in later modernity enable us to place Zaitoku-kai’s remarks in their street propaganda in comprehensible platform. Among them, concepts such as deprivation, social exclusion or ontological insecurity are keys to understand activities and argument of Zaitoku-kai and its sympathizers. Jock Young defines life in late modernity with ontological insecurity or uncertainty of identity. [12] Future is no longer a place for hope but it is shadowed by prospect of “risks”. In individualized society, we all have to live through social problems and social contradictions as “individual”. In the world of “self-responsibility” where nation-state declared its inability to provided sufficient social service to every member of society, more people would feel frustration of being excluded and abandoned. Frustration needs to find its own targets to be blamed.

In terms of social security and welfare system, nation-state has been going through modification process by neo-liberal economic reform. Clearly, idea that society or nation take care of living cost of its members has stepped away to neo-liberal socio-economic society in which individuals are exposed to arbitrariness of the market. Ulrich Beck’s argument on “Individualization of risk” also gives us important insight to understand the rise of racism in contemporary Japan. In “individualized” society, each person is expected to live his/her “own” life. Each decision is his/her and the cost of the decision is also his/hers. Individuals are exposed to endless pressure to make decision to live “good life”. It could be that those who fell to racism are individuals who could no longer endure the burden of freedom in late modernity. In other words, they are weak individuals who “decide” anchor their endangered identity by hating “enemy”. Despite the fact that argument deployed by Zaitoku-kai is obscure and easy to refute, their irritation and deprivation they feel in society is authentic and difficult to care. Their highlighted commitment to historical revisionism can be understood as a struggle to endure social exclusion by excluding knowledge that are perceived as humiliation to the idealized “Japan” to which they identify themselves with.

The mob in late modernity embodies this contradictory but significant process of our time. What has been taking place right now is “re-nationalization” in a time of “de-nationalization”. While the nation-state has seem to abandoned its traditional roles as to ensure employment or providing socio-economical safety net for citizens, in eyes of the excluded the “nation” and the “state” are the last straw that some people ontologically rely on. By being “Japanese” they can preserve their dignity and superiority over ethnic minorities or Korean residents.

As early as 2006, a free-lance writer Akagi Tomohiro declared in his widely-discussed paper that in a society where prospect for success is limited, total disorder such as “war” is the only and foremost “hope”. His desperate
declaration that condemned the liberal intellectual “giant” in post-war Japan, underwrites the presence of cynicism that spread in society. Central themes in Akagi’s argument were difficulty to secure dignity and desperate longing for social upheaval that might cancel all socio-economic stagnation he was (perceived to be) embedded to.

4. Conclusion

This paper concludes that potential of Japanese civil society must be noted. Since beginning of 2013, Zaitoku-kai’s activities have been challenged by protesters. As described in the beginning of this report, the numbers of protesters customary called “counter” exceed those of Zaitoku-kai demonstration in major cities. In Tokyo, for example as many as 2300 citizens appeared to surround racists group of 300 or so. Zaitoku-kai’s demonstration scheduled in July was cancelled due to security reason. Due to the increasing number of “counters”, police authority who is in charge of maintenance of public order advised Zaitoku-kai to refrain from demonstration in the election period.

A citizen organization “Shit-back That Racist” or “Shibaki-tai” (officially named Racist-wo-shibaki-tai, literally means special unit to attack racists) has led the counter in Tokyo since last February. The purpose of “Shibaki-tai” is to prevent racists groups from harassing and attacking on Korean residence. The tactics of “Shibaki-tai” is to make use of police. Noma Yasumichi, coordinator of “Shibaki-tai” carefully presented the anti-racist group with “violent” image. “Shibaki”, literally means to hit or to strike with one’s fist. Contrary to its violent name, “Shibaki-tai” confront to racists in non-violent way. To show their presence, to vocally condemn hate speech and to reproach or to enlighten racists are methods. In order to maintain order, police was forced to mobilize more policemen, which limited the hitherto uncontrolled activities of Zaitoku-kai. February 9 was the first day that “Shibaki-tai” employed and other citizen’s group or individuals followed. Social Networking Service such as Twitter was used to share information and tactics of the “counter”. On February 17, the counter racist unit was joined by more citizens demonstrating placards. The number of people who stood against racists in the beginning was only about 30. Those placards read “Stop Hate Speech” or “Why Can’t We Be Friends?” In Osaka, too, SNS-based ant-racism movement started to confront and outnumber the Zaitoku-kai’s demonstration and street propaganda.

Ideologically, anti-Zaitoku-kai movement is diverse and cannot be categorized into single entities. The movement has been driven by resentment toward activities of Zaitoku-kai. The counter-racist movement had shown that Japanese civil society does care about problem of exclusion based on ethnicity and race. It also shows that there is liberal nationalism functioning in Japanese civil society. Not only that people who value fairness and equality can mobilize themselves is encouraging, it also provokes us with another significant question. Under what circumstances are people attracted by racist ideologies?

As participants of counter-racism movement themselves well acknowledge, Zaitoku-kai and allies who appeared in off-line world are only a visualized symptom of problem that developed within our society. They are just the tip of the iceberg. There are greater number of individuals who somewhat appreciate destructive activities performed by Zaitoku-kai. Hidden by their extremities, tacit sympathizer whose anti-foreigner sentiment is satisfied does exist behind PC screen. As observed in their desperate speech, those racists may really be “victims” of our society in which burden on individual has been heavier. So long as the deep-rooted problem remains, some weak individuals would degrade themselves to become racist. Civil society need to focus on two overlapping realities by conceptually different problem. One front is against visualized racism and the goal is to deter outburst of racism or hate speech. The other is about the way in which society in late modernity functions. Theoretically, for those who see themselves as the excluded and deprived, being “Japanese” is one of few identities that assure their dignity. In this sense, to examine the way in which racism occurs would give us insight to prevent it from attracting more people. To question why racist propaganda acquired certain popularity and who are listening to their propaganda is the first step.

† Among various counter hate speech, “Racists are shame of Japan” was quite popular one. The claim is based on a perception that Japanese nation will not tolerate racism. This perception and sentiment is variant of “nationalism”. The anti-racism movement has shown that “national pride” function as deterrent against such ultra-nationalistic movement as Zaitoku-kai’s.
References

11. ibid, p.145.